

# **BUD BEASLEY: NEVADA EDUCATOR, COACH, AND ATHLETE**

Interviewee: Bud Beasley  
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## **Description**

Bud Beasley's career as an educator in Reno spanned seventy years. Born in New Mexico in 1910, Beasley soon moved to California, where he graduated from Santa Cruz High School. He came to Reno in 1930 where he enrolled in the University of Nevada on a football scholarship and participated in other sports both on and off campus. When he first decided that he wanted to be a coach, he was surprised to learn that he also had to be a teacher. That proved to be a blessing for him and for his students as he soon learned to love teaching as much as coaching.

Bud's first teaching assignment was in Battle Mountain, Nevada. One year later he returned to Reno, and for forty years—from 1936 to 1976—he was coach and teacher at Reno High School. Bud's sense of humor, dedication, sincerity, concern for all people, and his intensity—both in the classroom and on the athletic fields—made him the legend that he is today.

After retiring from Reno High School, he began teaching at Washoe High School and continued teaching and inspiring students till he was past the age of ninety. He is believed to be one of the longest serving teachers in the United States. His former students include judges, attorneys, doctors, business executives, and educators. He was proud of them all but was especially proud of his many former students who became educators.

Several schools in Washoe County are named after those who had been taught by Bud, and, of course, Bud himself had a school named after him—Bud Beasley Elementary School. Bud spent many happy hours visiting with the students and faculty of "his" school, and there is a large trophy case in the lobby displaying many of his awards and baseball memorabilia.

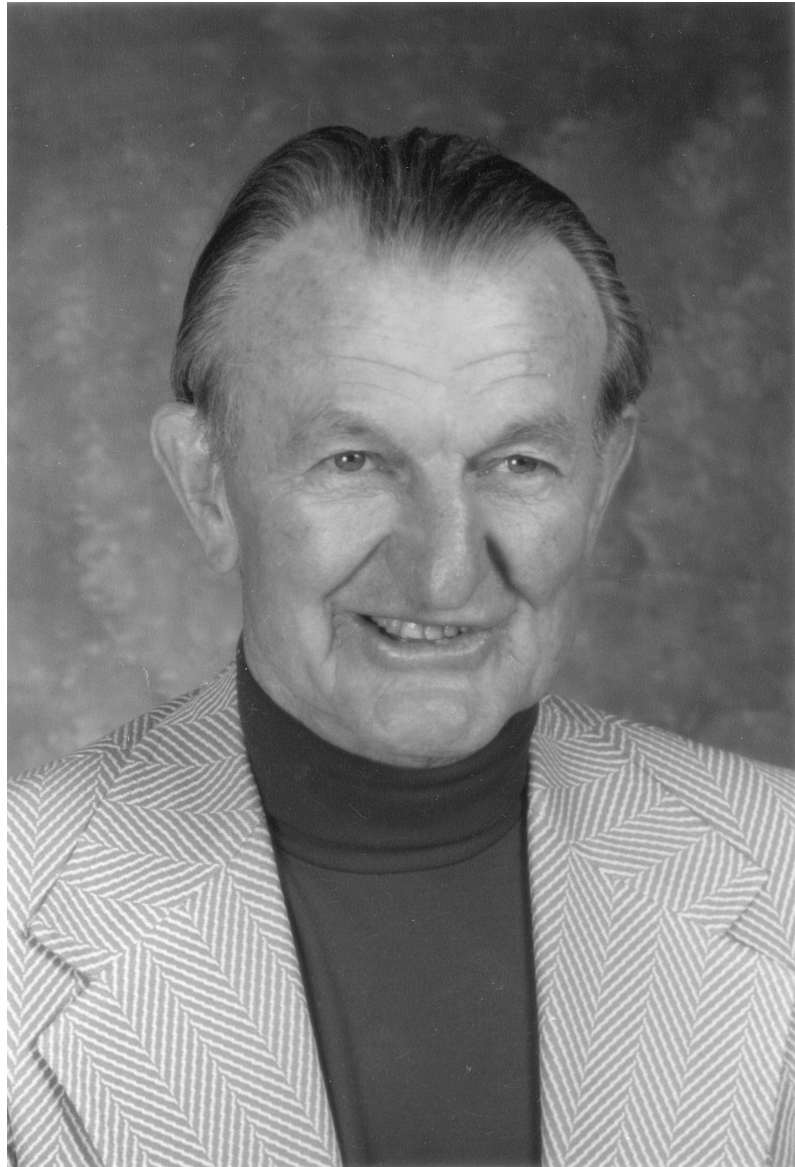
Coaching and teaching always came first for Bud Beasley; however, he had an impressive baseball record, both as an amateur in Reno and as a professional player with the Sacramento and Seattle teams of the Pacific Coast League, one of the best minor leagues in the United States at that time. Bud played with and against many of the top professional ball players of his era.

Bud Beasley passed away in July 2004 at the age of ninety-three. People will remember him for many different things, but perhaps his greatest legacy is his former students, who will pass on to future generations the beliefs and philosophies they learned from him. Readers are sure to enjoy this memoir of an educator, a coach, and above all, a wonderful human being who truly made a difference.



Bud Beasley

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Nevada Educator, Coach, and Athlete

*From oral history interviews  
conducted by Dwayne Kling*

*Edited by Richard Hoadley*

University of Nevada  
Oral History Program

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## PREFACE

Since 1965 the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) has been collecting eyewitness accounts of Nevada's remembered past. While there is no standard chronicler profile nor rigid approach to interviewing, each oral history plumbs human memory to gain a better understanding of the past. Following the precedent established by Allan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948 (and perpetuated since by academic programs such as ours throughout the English-speaking world), these manuscripts are called oral histories. Some confusion surrounds the meaning of the term. To the extent that these "oral" histories can be read, they are not oral, and while they are useful historical sources, they are not themselves history. Still, custom is a powerful force. Historical and cultural records that originate in tape-recorded interviews are almost uniformly labeled "oral histories," and our program follows that usage.

The transcripts that resulted from Dwayne Kling's interviews of Bud Beasley have been slightly edited for readability, but the natural episodic structure follows the interview tapes. Amusement or laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of the

sentence; and ellipses are used not to indicate that material has been deleted, but rather to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete . . . or there is a pause for dramatic effect. For readers who are interested in examining the unaltered records, copies of the tape-recorded interviews are available at the UNOHP's reading room on the University of Nevada, Reno campus. While the program can vouch that the statements in this volume were made by Bud Beasley and that he has reviewed and approved the transcript, it does not assert that all statements are entirely free of error. As with all oral history projects, Mr. Beasley has recorded his *remembered* past, and memory is never flawless. Readers should exercise the same caution used when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other primary sources of historical information.

UNOHP  
Reno, Nevada

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## INTRODUCTION

When I first met Bud Beasley, I told him that dozens of his former students had told me how he had influenced them more than anyone they had ever met. Bud's face lit up, and he said, "That's my pay. That's why I keep teaching. I enjoy what I am doing, and if I can continue to have that influence on my students now, hey, that's what it's all about."

Bud Beasley was born in New Mexico in 1910 but soon moved to California, where he graduated from Santa Cruz High School. He came to Reno in 1930 where he enrolled in what was then known as the University of Nevada (now the University of Nevada, Reno). He had been awarded a football scholarship, but he also participated in other sports both on and off campus. When he first decided that he wanted to be a coach, he was surprised to learn that in order to coach at the high school level he also had to be a teacher. That proved to be a blessing, for him and for his students, as he soon learned to love teaching as much as coaching.

After graduation Bud's first teaching assignment was in Battle Mountain, Nevada. One year later he returned to Reno, and for forty years—from 1936 to 1976—he was a coach and a teacher at Reno

High School. Bud's sense of humor, his dedication, his sincerity, his concern for all people, and his intensity—both in the classroom and on the athletic fields—made him the legend that he is today.

After retiring from Reno High School, he began teaching at Washoe High School and was still teaching there when he was over ninety years of age. He is believed to be one of the longest serving teachers in the United States. His former students include judges, attorneys, doctors, business executives, and educators. He is proud of them all but is especially proud of his many former students who became educators. In the year 2000, over one hundred of his former pupils were working in the Washoe County School District.

Several schools in Washoe County are named after those who have been taught by Bud, and, of course, Bud himself has a school named after him—Bud Beasley Elementary School. Bud has spent many happy hours visiting with the students and faculty of “his” school, and there is a large trophy case in the lobby displaying many of his awards and baseball memorabilia.

No discussion of Bud would be complete without a mention of his baseball skills. Coaching and teaching always came first; however, Bud had an impressive baseball record, both as an amateur in Reno and as a professional player with the Sacramento and Seattle teams of the Pacific Coast League. The Pacific Coast League at that time was one of the best minor leagues in the United States, and Bud played with and against many of the top professional ball players of his era.

People will remember him for many different things, but perhaps his greatest legacy is his former students, who will pass on to future generations the beliefs and philosophies they learned from Bud. Readers are sure to enjoy this memoir of an educator, a coach, and above all, a wonderful human being who truly has made a difference.

DWAYNE KLING  
Reno, Nevada



# 1

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## BEGINNINGS

Dwayne Kling: *Good morning, it's February 20, 2001. My name is Dwayne Kling, and I am with Bud Beasley at his home on Fairview Drive in Reno, Nevada. Bud, I'll start out by asking you when and where you were born.*

Bud Beasley: I was born in Melrose, New Mexico, December 8, 1910.

*Are you currently married?*

Yes, I am. My wife Nellie Beasley and I, we've been married forty years or more.

*Do you have any children?*

No children of our own, but we have taken into our home and raised seventeen foster children.

*So over a period of years, you didn't have them all at once?*

No, thank God! [laughter] No, from time to time. Some of them for a short time, and some of them quite a while.

*So you must have a lot of foster grandchildren?*

That we have. [laughter] And they are scattered all over: Washington, Modesto, Sacramento, scattered all over the country. We still have pretty close contact with about twelve of them, and we get together for Christmas dinners and Thanksgiving and that sort of thing.

*Well, that's really nice. You say you were born in New Mexico. When did you come to Nevada?*

Well, to tell you the truth, I left New Mexico when I was about two years old and went to Texas, and I was in Texas up until about age eight, and around eight or ten, I came from Texas to California and went to grammar school and high school in Santa Cruz.

*So when did you come to Nevada then?*

After I got out of high school. In high school I played football, basketball, baseball, and one of my coaches was the famous Rabbit Bradshaw that became the All American at Nevada. Rabbit Bradshaw was my coach in high school, and he kept talking, "Nevada, Nevada." So in 1930 I came to the University of Nevada on a football scholarship and played football at the university from 1930 to 1934. I was a halfback and a quarterback on the football team at the University of Nevada.

*Did your parents come with you then, or did they stay?*

No, I was on my own, totally on my own.



*You mentioned to me that you'd met Pappy Smith of Harolds Club at Santa Cruz at some time. Was that before you went to the University of Nevada?*

Yes, I was still in high school, and I was working on the boardwalk at Santa Cruz, and Pappy Smith had a concession on the boardwalk there, and I had a soft-drink concession and spied for some of the other events on the boardwalk. Once in a while we worked state fairs and carnivals, and I got to know Pappy Smith long before he was coming to Reno. [laughter]

*"In high school I played football, basketball, and baseball . . ."* In football gear at Santa Cruz High School.

*So the carnivals had a route that they went to, and you'd see him at different places?*

Right.

*You mentioned the sports that you played in college, mainly football. Did you play baseball and basketball?*

I played freshman basketball at the University of Nevada, and our football coach at that time was Philbrook out of Notre Dame, and Philbrook was also the freshman basketball coach. So I played freshman basketball for Philbrook. Doc Martie was the varsity coach, of course—the very colorful Dr. Martie—and one of the players that I played against as a freshman was Jake Lawlor. Then,

at the university at that time they had no organized baseball, but they had a very strong and fast inter-fraternity league, and we played there on the university campus on a very, very poor field, dirt field, under very poor conditions. [laughter] It was located somewhat where the economics buildings are located now. Then, during the time that I was going to the University of Nevada, I was also playing baseball for Jack Threlkel, who had a very fast semi-pro team.

*So this would be in early 1930?*

That's right—early 1930s, 1933, 1934, particularly.

*So you mentioned the inter-fraternity teams. If you weren't in a fraternity you couldn't play baseball, then? Or did they have some independents?*

Well, you played inter-fraternity ball, and then you played summer ball with Jack Threlkel and Lovelock and Fallon and teams like that. Well, we had a very fast Sagebrush League, then.

*Wait a minute. In that fraternity baseball, about how many teams would there be? Would every fraternity have a team?*

Just about. Yes. There were about eight teams in there, and it was a good, fast fraternity league. Quite a few of the fellows in it played summer baseball when school was out.

*Who organized the team, then? Did each fraternity have their own manager? Did you manage one?*

Right, each fraternity had their own manager, and it was sort of like an inter-scholastic league, but all fraternities were involved

in it, and Jake Lawlor and Tommy Hill and Oscar Freitag and the Peccoles. They played in that league.

*Oh, they were all at the university at the same time?*

Yes, all at the university at that time.

*So how about basketball? Were there any basketball teams there, then?*

Basketball was very popular on campus. The coach was Doc Martie, and he was a good one. He produced some of the finest college teams, for a small school. He was playing St. Mary's and Santa Clara and San Jose, Fresno, San Francisco. And they were playing in the Old Gym, which was classic, because the Old Gym was very, very small and the bleachers came right up to the edge of the court. [laughter] And dark, and Jake Lawlor played in the league then, and Bob O'Shaughnessy was playing for the university, that later played baseball. But the university was, for a small school, very active. And another thing that I think is history that on the university football schedule, at that time, we had Cal on our schedule every year, and St. Mary's on our schedule. And at that time St. Mary's was better than Cal and Stanford.

We also played Stanford one year, and our easy games at that time were Cal-Davis and Fresno and San Jose. Provo, Utah, was on our schedule. But every year we played independently, and we did it primarily to get the guarantee. We got a good guarantee from St. Mary's and Cal, and we played our games in the Bay area in the old Kezar Stadium.

*So, who was the football coach?*

Philbrook was the first one. Brick Mitchell was second. Chet Scranton was the assistant coach, and Doc Martie was the trainer for football.

*What position did you play in football?*

Halfback and quarterback. I was halfback on the football team and all the way back in my studies. [laughter] By the way, our football teams were recruited from outside Nevada, pretty much. They came from all over, from Tennessee, from Indiana, out of the Los Angeles area, and most of our athletes came from the outside, but Jack Hill of Sparks was very good. And Jake Lawlor, of course, came out from Iowa to play. But for a small school . . . I imagine the university at that time was only five or six thousand.

*Five or six hundred, you mean?*

Well, no, we had more than five or six hundred. We were in the thousands.

*Thousands at that time?*

Yes, but probably not. President Clark was president of the university. But for a small school, they did very well.

*So they had a good recruiting system some way or other. Maybe the alumni, like Bradshaw, helped you.*

The alumni did most of the recruiting. Harry Frost of Reno Print was a big recruiter for the university and a big booster for the university. And Ty Cobb one year was our football manager who later became the sportswriter, you know. [laughter] It was a great little school to go to, though. I enjoyed it. Academically, in my junior and senior year I became very interested in teaching, and my first year of teaching at the University of Nevada was practice teaching at Mary S. Doten. I taught fifth grade at Mary S. Doten in 1933. In

1934, my senior year, I did my practice teaching at the old Northside School, and that should get some history.

*Let's talk about that Northside School for a little bit. Where was it located?*

It was located in the worst possible place. On one side was Fourth Street, and Fourth Street at that time was Highway 40, and all the trucks through Reno came down Highway 40 right in front of the school. [laughter] And in back of the school were the railroad tracks. So it was located down there pretty much where the bowling stadium is now. To conduct class in there with the trains on one side and the highway on the other was something else. But I did my practice teaching there in 1934.

*That was a junior high school?*

Yes, a junior high school. Darrell Swope was the principal, and he had been the coach there. I did my practice teaching there, and at that time—this is something I think noteworthy—it was impossible to graduate from the university and teach in the Reno-Sparks area. Everybody had to go out and serve one year out in the state and then come back. No one was hired off campus; everybody had to go out to some town in the state and serve the apprenticeship and then come back to the system.

So my first year out of college, I went to Battle Mountain and taught at Battle Mountain and coached at Battle Mountain that one year 1934-1935. Then, back into Reno, now as a coach and teacher at the old Northside Junior High. We only had two junior highs at the time, Billingshurst and Northside. Only one high school, Reno High, where the Sundowner Hotel is now located at West and Fifth Street. That was the old Reno High, with a student body of three or four hundred students.

*Where was Billingshurst located?*

Billingshurst was located out where the old recreation area is on Plumas now. And that old gym out there was the old Billingshurst gym. Billingshurst was the superintendent of schools, and it was Billingshurst that first hired me when I came in from Battle Mountain. E. Otis Vaughn was the principal of Reno High.

I taught and coached at Northside Junior High during 1935 and 1936. Then, the next year I went to Reno High as an assistant coach to the late and great Herb Foster. I was the assistant coach and history teacher, 1936, at Reno High.

*Why did you select Battle Mountain, or were you appointed to go there? Did you have a choice of places?*

Well, I applied different places, and Battle Mountain hired me. I had a very enjoyable and eventful year at Battle Mountain. So much so that in a way I hated to leave, but everybody wanted to get back into Reno.

So Billingshurst hired me. Billingshurst was a great baseball fan, by the way. He attended a lot of the Threlkel games. And in college I was playing for Threlkel, so I had a good in with Billingshurst. So when I finished my apprenticeship in Battle Mountain, Billingshurst brought me back in to Northside. Then the next year he moved me to the high school as an assistant to Herb Foster. I coached baseball and assisted Herb in football. And some of the greats of that era were Frank Peterson, later of Santa Clara, Al Solari, UCLA. Fred Forson, Ed Whiting were the great athletes of the 1930s at Reno High.

*And you were always Herb Foster's assistant at Reno?*

Right. I was the line coach, and he was the head coach. Then I coached baseball in the spring; he coached track. He coached varsity basketball, and I coached junior varsity basketball.

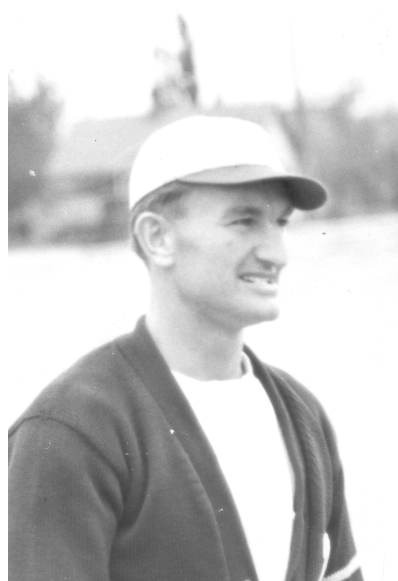


*So you had a great relationship with Herb Foster.*

Oh, yes. And Reno High hadn't played baseball up until then, so I brought baseball back to Reno High, and we played under very adverse conditions. We had no baseball field; we'd practice at Powning Park; we'd practice at Billingshurst, we'd practice in Idlewild. [laughter] We'd practice at Jack Threlkel's and played most of our games at Jack Threlkel's Park.

*Oh, you did?*

Right. The football field was located over on East Ninth Street where Central Administration now is, and the kids would have to walk from West Fifth over to Ninth Street with their shoes tied around their neck, walk over in their civilian shoes, take their shoes off. Each kid had to pick up a bucket and go out on the dirt field and pick up a bucket of rocks and dump it out to the side.



Coach Beasley at Reno High School in the 1930s.

[laughter] And then they'd put their helmets on and practice football. At the end of practice, they'd walk back over to West Fifth and take their shower. [laughter]

*They got a good workout just going back and forth to practice.*

Right. And no face mask in those days, and old, ribbed, leather helmets. The coach would take the practice jerseys home and wash them for the games. [laughter] It was really something.

*So they never had a football field until they went to their new location?*

Right.

*How about some of the other teams you played against?*

You can't believe the teams we played against in our league then, and all the little farming towns like Yerington and Stewart and Fallon—they were tough, because they had those farm kids, you know, and if they played against everybody the way they played against Reno, boy, they'd win all the time, because they had these rough, tough farm kids, and Stewart had the Indian kids. All the fields were dirt, though, no turf fields at all. Played under some very miserable conditions.

*Well, you guys were the city slickers. Everybody was shooting at you.*

Oh, yes. We were the biggies, and our big rival was Sparks. Tip Whitehead was coaching at Sparks at the time, and they were our big rivals, and every year that was the "Big Game." Then we also played for the state championship in Las Vegas. One year down in Las Vegas; the next year we'd play here. We played a state tournament in basketball then, too, and the state tournament was held at the university, and all teams could come in and enter the state tournament, so that was a big time.

*When you were with Reno High, you say you played one year in Vegas, and one year in Reno, so how is it determined who played, whether it was Reno, Sparks, or Yerington? Did you have a league that you had to win to play?*

Right. We had to win our division. They had to win their division, and there were only two or three schools in Vegas, and Reno and Sparks up here, primarily.

*Well, did the littler schools like Fallon or Lovelock ever get into the state championship?*

They did in basketball, but not football.

*Well, some of them may not have had eleven-man football. Were there eight-man football leagues, then, or six-man?*

No, no six-man football, then, at all. Everybody was eleven.

*Did Reno High ever play for the championship when you and Foster were there?*

Oh, yes, several years we played the state. All state-championship games were played at the university, and all state basketball games were played at the university.

*So, how long did you coach at Reno High, then?*

At Reno High? I was there from 1936 to 1976, which, by the way, was the longest coaching record of anyone in the state of Nevada. No one had coached that long. During my coaching, all those years, there were only two coaches that I know of. Bill Ireland, who's still going strong in Las Vegas—the two of us had state champions in football, basketball, and baseball. And I don't think any other coach has won a championship in all three sports.

*Well, was that when Ireland was coaching at Fernley?*

Yes, he coached at Fernley. He coached all over the state. Bill was a gypsy coach. [laughter] He moved around.

*So, he won his championships at different places?*

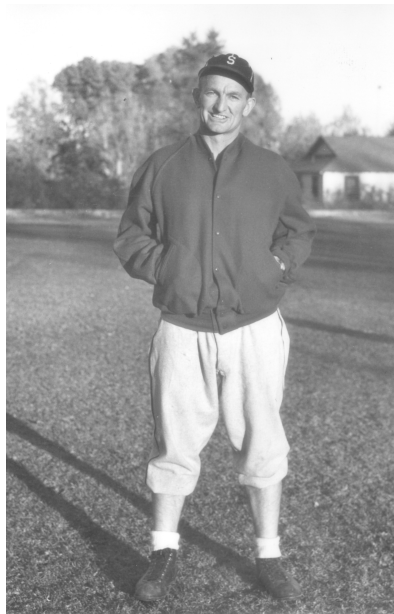
Right.

*So he was kind of your competitor there for awhile.*

Oh, yes, but we were very close. He's a great guy. We've always been very good friends.

*Well, when you were coaching there you were also teaching, is that correct?*

Right. I was teaching history, teaching physical education, teaching gymnastics, fencing, boxing, baseball, sponsoring over half a dozen different things: the yearbook, the Huskiettes, the Three Arts, the cheerleaders, Block R, putting out the yearbook. Those days you were a one man band. You had to be, because they didn't have a coach for everything. And as a matter of fact, one thing that bothers me a little bit now, in baseball for instance, I had forty kids out for baseball, and I was the only coach. Now they have sixteen



Coach Beasley at Reno High in the 1940s.

or twenty kids and four coaches. [laughter] And the fields and bats, balls, everything—so much different. It's apples and oranges to compare.

But I did have some great players. Fred Dallimore, who later became the head baseball coach at Las Vegas, the University of Las Vegas, and scout for the Orioles, and the pitching coach for the Orioles. Fred Dallimore was one of mine. Dan Hellman, one of mine. Orin Snyder, who played in the Willy [Western International] League with us, was one of mine, and quite a few of my players went on to play pro ball, or very fast semi-pro ball. So they were some great years. Thoroughly enjoyed my coaching. I coached gymnastics and brought gymnastics back to Reno High, also.

Our baseball league, at first, there weren't enough high schools playing. We'd play Fallon and Sparks and Carson, Stewart Indian School, but we'd also play some of those university fraternities, and every year we would go over and play the prison. And that



*"I was teaching . . . and sponsoring over half a dozen different things . . . ."*  
Bud and Nellie Beasley chaperoning a Reno High School dance in the 1940s.

was quite a treat going over and playing the prison. You got a good meal, and every year the prison had a baseball team. The only thing was, the warden wouldn't let them travel. [laughter]

*No road games?*

No road games. [laughter]

*To go back to when you were going to the university, I know you played ball there in the summer, but did you have other jobs since you had to earn a living?*

Yes, as a matter of fact, the football coach got most of us jobs to help pay for our tuition and so forth. So at one time I had the job with the laundry. I'd collect all the football suits after every game and take them to the laundry to be cleaned. So I worked there. I bused dishes and waited tables at the Elks Club and the Twentieth Century Club. You name it, all kinds of part-time jobs while I was going to college, even though I was on a scholarship.

*Yes. What did a scholarship entail in those days? Part of your tuition and board and room, or books?*

You got tuition and books and that sort of thing. We didn't get board and room then, but we did get our tuition paid. And that's rather rare, too. To get around that tuition business, we all had to register from some Nevada town. [laughter]

*Oh. So you were all in-state students?*

To get out of paying the tuition. And the coach would call us all in and assign us a town. And he assigned me to Battle Mountain. So I ended up teaching in Battle Mountain, and it was the first time I had ever seen the town. [laughter]

*First time you had ever been to your hometown?*

Yes. [laughter]

*So all the athletes, most of them had some kind of job there in the summer?*

Yes, we all worked jobs during the summer. When Brick Mitchell was coaching he got me a job at Westwood in the lumber mill up there, so the coaches would get us jobs around different places. Quite a few of the players had jobs at the Reno Garage, because they played during the summer, so almost all of the help at the Reno Garage were college ballplayers.

*What year did you graduate from the university, then?*

Graduated 1934.

*Then, as you said earlier, you went to Battle Mountain in 1935.*

Battle Mountain for one year and came back into Northside, then into Reno High. All the time I was coaching and teaching at Reno High. I was doing summer-school work and night classes—post-graduate work at the university—and did that for ten years or so, and at the same time I was teaching and coaching at Reno High. I was doing post-graduate work at Columbia, and later on at Stanford.

*Columbia in New York?*

Yes, New York.

*Did you go to New York to do that?*

Yes, and then I did post-graduate work at the University of Washington, at Stanford, and at the University of Nevada.

*When you did all the post-graduate work, Bud, was that during the summertimes?*

At Stanford, it was the summertime. At the University of Washington, when I was playing for Seattle, I was going to school and playing ball for Seattle. The other post-graduate work was at the University of Nevada.

*And Columbia?*

Columbia—I took the time off to go there.

*Did you take a year of sabbatical leave?*

No. I did it in the summer.

*Oh, just a summer. How did you happen to pick Columbia? Did they have a special field that you were interested in?*

I think it was recommended by the University of Nevada, because I wanted a course in social science, and the university didn't have it, so they recommended it.

*What year do you think that was you went to Columbia? Was that after the war?*

No, before the war. It was around the late 1930s.

*Well, all these post-graduate courses you took were pertaining to education in one way or another.*



Right, everything pertaining to education.

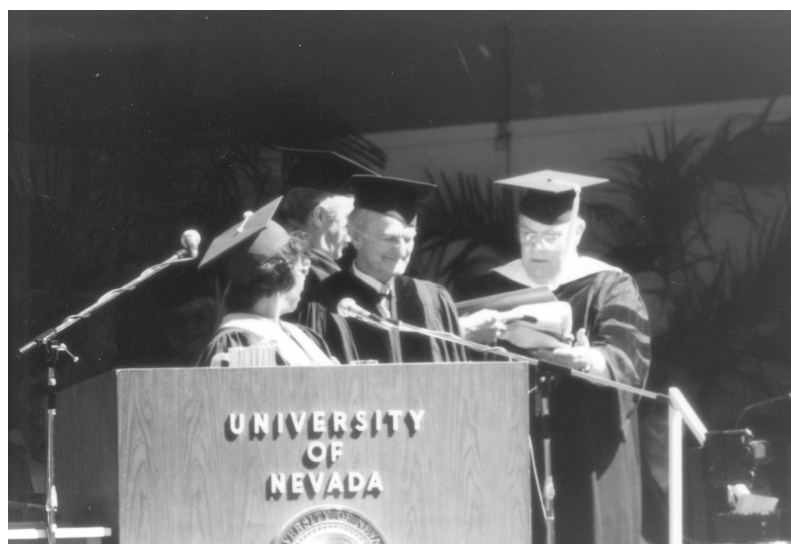
*So did you get some advanced degrees, then?*

Yes, a master's in history, a master's in physical education, and then I have a doctor's degree from the University of Nevada. [The University of Nevada, Reno, awarded Mr. Beasley an honorary doctorate in 1989.]

*Is that in education, also, the doctor's degree?*

No. That was in humanities. Then, during the 1940s, when I was coaching and teaching at Reno High, I was also coaching a girl's softball team, and in coaching this girl's softball team during the summer, I met my wife Nellie, and I married her.

*Was she playing on the softball team?*



Bud Beasley receiving an honorary doctorate at UNR, 1989.

She was playing on the softball team, right, and they had a very, very strong girls softball team. They toured the whole Western United States and Canada and beat most of the teams that they were playing. The year that Alameda won the world's championship, Reno lost to them by a score of two to one. And she also was quite a bowler. She's in the bowling hall of fame and still teaches and coaches bowling. She teaches the league bowlers and the Washoe High bowlers and became quite famous in bowling—in the Women's Bowling Hall of Fame. But she was a great softball player.

*Who sponsored that softball team? Who paid for everybody to travel around?*

Chism's was one of the sponsors, and then the various gaming clubs sponsored them when they traveled.



*"She's in the bowling hall of fame and still teaches and coaches bowling."* Nellie Beasley, second from right, on a bowling team in 1949.

*Like Harolds and Harrah's?*

Right, and they traveled all up through the Northwest and had a very, very strong girls team.

*What was the team called?*

Reno Athletics, I believe.

*So you were the coach? You made all these trips, too, then, or some of them?*

Well, no. By that time I played semi-pro ball. [laughter]

*But that's where you met Nellie?*

Yes. That's how I met her.

*How much longer after you met her did you get married?*

About two years. We'd gone together about two years, I think.

*So what year did you get married, then?*

About 1941.

*To get back to the university, we've mentioned most of the coaches that were there when you were there. Were there any special educators or teachers, professors?*

I feel I owe a great deal to Dr. Traner who was head of the education department, and Dr. Traner did a lot of my supervising as a student teacher, and he was a real inspiration. He sold me on teaching. I was already sold on coaching. All my life, from clear

back in high school, I wanted to coach. Teaching—I didn't want to teach, no way, but I did want to coach. Dr. Traner got me deeply involved in education, and it came as a total surprise to me in my senior year that, in order to coach, you had to teach some subject. And this was devastating, because I just wanted to coach, not teach. But Dr. Traner sort of won me over to the teaching side of it. And what a difference that is today. You can coach high school and not even teach or be on the staff at all, and I don't know whether that's good or bad. In the case of Pete Savage I think it's probably good, because he's so dedicated and just can't afford to give up his business and teach.

*Pete Savage is the coach of Reno High School.*

Right. I consider Pete a very good coach, but in those days you had to teach *and* coach. Now, what am I going to teach? Traner got me interested in history, so my first teaching experience in college was practice teaching at Mary S. Doten, and I enjoyed it so much. One reason, I think, that helped me in my teaching goal was I was playing football at the university at the same time. So these little fifth graders now had a college football player as their teacher, and this gave me fabulous control over the class and discipline and otherwise, and now I began to enjoy it, because those little fifth graders were so aware of it. [laughter] So I began to enjoy my teaching, and now I accepted the fact of teaching and coaching. OK. I went for that.

*This Mr. Traner you mentioned, is that the gentleman that Traner Middle School is named after?*

Right. Traner Middle School. He was quite an inspiration to me—I would say, the number one person at the university who kept me on the teaching side. And now I am becoming more interested in

academics. I don't want to just be a football jock. I am taking all different kinds of courses and am really interested in academics.

*And you were leaning towards history, you say?*

Right.

*What in particular, American history or ancient?*

Well, when I was first teaching history at Reno High I was teaching ancient history, and one of the things that my graduates always remember is making maps. Boy, every kid had to make maps, and they've never forgotten that. They still remind me of mapmaking. While teaching at Reno High, I think I should mention a few . . . and this is always dangerous. It's just like if I asked you who were the greatest ballplayers you ever played against. You are going to leave out somebody, see. But among my outstanding former students . . .

*How about former teachers? Let's do the teachers first.*

There was Bob Scott, who was superintendent of schools in Carson City; Roger Trounday and Buddy Garfinkle, who were vice principals at Hug; and then Buddy Garfinkle became principal at Hug. And Lou Mendive, after whom the Mendive School is named, is one of my former students. Over one hundred employees of the Washoe County School District now—teachers, principals, and staff support—are my former students. Over one hundred of them out there now.

*That's impressive.*

One of my most famous former students and players is Ed Reed, after whom Reed High School is named, a federal judge.

Bill Raggio, Senator Bill Raggio, was one of my former students. Judges Gabrielli and Torvinen and Salcedo—my former students. Businessmen, like you mentioned: Pete Cladianos, Roger Trounday, executive vice president, John Ascuaga's Nugget; Don Carano of the Eldorado; Greg Carano of the Eldorado; Ben Akert, Akert Liquors; Harker and Harker; the Casazzas of Casazza Architects—all my former students. So I have had doctors and lawyers and legislators. Ted Short, former head of the county commission, my former student. And I'm proud of those guys out there.

*You should be. Well, you have sent many leaders out into the community.*

Definitely.

*And to get back to the university, besides Mr. Traner, who helped put you out there to teach these kids?*

Dr. Traner is number one. Harold Brown, Dr. Harold Brown was a big factor. I enjoyed my history teachers, by the names of Smith and Feemster. And Dr. Peter Frandsen, who turned out a lot of the local doctors here, was quite an influence on me, too. Another one, Dr. Church, was quite an influence. He felt a personal interest in me. And Dr. Thompson, Dean Thompson, I had his kids in school later on—Gordon Thompson. But those professors I particularly enjoyed, because I felt they took a personal interest in me. And incidentally, that had quite an influence on me. Because of them, today I take a personal interest in my students. They are more than just a student, and in my teaching today, I start by putting the kid as the most important, the subject matter second. But that kid to me is the most important, and unless I establish a rapport with him, you're not going to get

through to him on whatever the subject. So, because these particular instructors did that for me, I now pass it on.

*You're carrying their legacy forward? And, hopefully, someone is carrying yours forward, from this group of people.*

Right. In addition to this famous coach, Rabbit Bradshaw, a high school teacher by the name of Doc Fellowman was a teacher and coach, and he had considerable influence on me. He started an alumni association at Santa Cruz High School, of which I am a member, still. And due to his influence I started the now famous Reno High School Alumni Association, presently located on the Reno High campus. And sometime we must talk about that particular side of my life, because it still takes a great deal of my time and energy and love. And thanks again to one of my former students and famous businessman, Link Piazza of Chet and Link Piazza's Sportsman. Link gave a goodly portion of the money to open that building. The building was my dream, and Link supplied the money, and we were off and running.

I'm very proud of it. It's a museum where all the old memorabilia of Reno High is stored and collected, and a record of all our graduates. It's open on Fridays from two to five, and on Saturdays ten to two, and it's open to the public. It's a museum type of thing, plus, it's where all the records are stored of all our graduates that ever went through Reno High.

*So it is not just athletics?*

Oh, no. It's everything.

*Academics and athletics.*

Everything, right. But my old high school coach and teacher did this sort of thing at Santa Cruz, and I borrowed it, because I

just hated to see all this memorabilia going to pot. Yearbooks were being thrown out, trophies being thrown out, and that broke my heart. So I started collecting it and had it all here at home, which didn't please my wife too much. [laughter]

*She was glad to see the museum?*

Right. So now, I'm looking for a building in which to house it. I've got the dream, the idea, but no money. And my former students, like Earl Avansino and Al Solari and Link Piazzo, came forth with the money, and here we are; we're in business.

*Does it have a name on it?*

Yes, it's the Reno High Alumni Link Piazzo Building, with the name out in front, and it's really, really swank. It's on the Reno High campus on the northeast corner, right across from the federal building.

*So, volunteers man it during those hours that it's open?*

Right. We have a board of directors and a president. The present president, Joe Granata, Len Crocker, the past president, and a board of directors run and operate it—no salaries, but I would say it's probably the best organized alumni building in the United States. I don't know of any other high school that will match it. There are other alumni associations and this sort of thing. Sparks is starting one up now, but I doubt if there's another in the United States that will match this one.

*Well, that's quite an accomplishment, another legacy.*



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## OUTSTANDING RENO ATHLETES

*Let me ask you again about some of your other students, and/or student athletes at Reno High that went on to great glory.*

Well, you're going to overlook some, but you can't possibly leave out Charlie Springer, former chief justice of the supreme court, a track and football man. Don Carano was a track and football man, and basketball. Jimmy Melarkey, who played for the university, made quite a record at the university, in basketball in particular. Danny Hellman, who is a security officer at the Holiday now, was an outstanding pitcher, played pro ball in the Brooklyn chain, but due to injury, football injuries, it cut short his baseball career. But believe it or not, when the Silver Sox, a professional team, were playing at Moana, to get a crowd, they challenged the Reno High School team, and primarily just to get a crowd and promote it. In no way was it supposed to be a close game. Believe it or not, with Dan Hellman pitching, we lost the game in the tenth inning. It went extra innings. We lost the game by one run in the tenth inning with Hellman pitching.

*They probably wanted to sign him right there.*

Right. He was so good that a good part of the time I couldn't pitch him against the average high school, because nobody got to field the ball. He'd strike out eighteen, twenty guys a game. [laughter] He had a very good move to first base. One game we were playing, there was no one on first base, and we were in about the seventh inning. He calls time out, comes over, and says, "Coach, is it all right if I walk this guy, so I could practice my move to first?" [laughter]

I said, "Walk him." He walks the guy and picks him off of first—he was that good. [laughter]

Then of course Fred Dallimore, outstanding. Neunswander, another pitcher, outstanding. Jensen, Fred Bossieux.

*What Jensen was that?*

Perry Jensen. Not the Jensen that played for the Giants, but all of these players were good enough. And Orin Snyder, of course, who played in the Willy Loop with us. But all of these players were good enough that they played varsity for the university, when the university had a varsity team, and dozens and dozens of them played for Jack Threlkel when he had his very strong semi pro-team. Of course, you can't mention athletes without mentioning Al Solari who played for UCLA and Frank Peterson for Santa Clara. So these kids have gone on to do a great job.

*You mentioned a lot of baseball players, but not too many football players. Of course you had Solari and Peterson.*

Solari, Peterson, Harvey, Morrison were very good. And Jerry Lazzari, very good. In basketball you have to go with Melarkey, and some of those that later played for the University of Nevada. Track, of course, you can't leave out Charlie Springer, Gene

Mendiola, Marv Byars of Byars Construction. They were outstanding athletes in high school. Roger Trounday, outstanding. And also in education, as the principal of the school. Ken Fujii, outstanding.

*And all these fellows played for you at one time or another?*

Right, and also Lou Mendive of Mendive Middle School. Ed Reed, of course, played for me, and coached one year under me at Reno High. And he one time asked me, "I'm interested in law; I'm interested in coaching; I enjoy coaching. What do you think?"

And I said, "I'd love to have you as my assistant coach here forever, but you're too smart. Go into law," which he did and is now a federal judge. Also, I think that Clinton Wooster, in skiing, and the Ramsey brothers in skiing, and Dodie Post, skiing on the American Women's Olympic Team. The Poulsons—all great skiers.

*And they were all your students, also?*

Right. And, of course, Clinton Wooster is in law today. And Frankovich, both an athlete and an attorney today. John Frankovich and Sam Frankovich—they were all mine. So I'm proud of those kids out there that have really have gone places and done things.

*Well, you've left a mark on lots of people.*

Yes, true. At least, I hope that I have. The other day I gave a speech at one of the banquets here, in which mostly my former students out there, such as Don Manoukian, for instance, a world champion wrestler, and with the Forty-Niners . . .

*And the Raiders.*

. . . and the Raiders, and Ed Pine, with the Forty-Niners, great athlete in high school. Greg Morrison, great athlete in high school. But also, when I gave the speech the other day, with a number of my former students there, I congratulated them and said, “You people became a success in spite of me.” [laughter]

*Yes. You can say that, but it's not true.*

[laughter]

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## BASEBALL IN RENO

*There was a gentleman here in town, and you've mentioned his name a few times here while we've been talking. His name was Jake or Jack Threlkel, and you played for him. He owned a Reno garage, is that right?*

Right, he owned the Reno Garage.

*Which was located where?*

Located just across the street from the Majestic Theater, on the corner of First and Center Street. The old Reno City Hall was on one corner, the Majestic Theater on the other corner, and the Reno Garage on this corner.

*Now, the Reno Garage, did they repair automobiles? Was it a parking garage?*

It was parking primarily, but they also repaired. And Jack hired practically all his team to work for him, or he got them jobs around other places in town.

*So that was his source of revenue, the Reno Garage?*

Right, that was his main source of revenue. And the town and baseball owe a great deal to Jack Threlkel, because he had, by far, the best baseball park around here. The playing field itself was as good as anything in the Coast League. That playing field was great. Although, in the right field corner there was a chicken and turkey pen, and every now and then you'd hit a home run into the chicken fence. [laughter]

The stands were wooden, but there were good crowds. He drew good crowds, and he brought in the cream of the crop to play against him. The House of David appeared in here. The Kansas City Monarchs appeared here. Satchel Paige appeared here. And he brought in the top teams off the coast, such as the S.P. Stores, Moffat Manteca, and teams out of Sacramento, out of the San Joaquin Valley, out of Oakland and San Francisco. The best they had in that winter league played here. And he later put in lights. I think he was one of the first teams to put in lights. He was an eccentric old cuss and a very controversial character, but he did a great deal for baseball and did a great deal toward giving university players a chance to play. I think I mentioned some of those university players, such as Oscar Freitag, Bob O'Shaughnessy, the Cassinellis, and Jack Hill, Jake Lawlor, myself, Darrel Reynolds. A lot of university players and athletes played on Jack Threlkel's team. And he played independent ball, but he also had a team in the old Sagebrush League. And the town owes a great deal to Jack Threlkel. He was a tough, old character, not always the easiest to get along with, but nevertheless, he did a great deal for baseball locally.

*Do you know when he started in baseball? How he got to Reno, and when his first teams were?*



The 1940 Reno Garage team. Standing, left to right: Bud Beasley, unidentified, Tony Gomez, Fran Cassinelli, Bill Cassinelli, Stan Lloyd, Fran Menante. Seated, left to right: Unidentified, Pop Snyder, Wally Westlake, Jack Threlkel (owner/manager), Lefty Mayer, Geo Sargent, Bob Snyder, Chas Eastland.

He started in the late 1920's and all through the early 1930s. Then, in the 1940s, due to his age, he began to not take so much an active part in it as manager, but he leased his park out to the Reno Larks.

*To go back to the earlier days, did you call him Jack or Jake?*

Jack.

*Did some people call him Jake, or no?*

Not that I know of. I never heard him called that name. He was a very prominent member of the Rotary Club. And the Rotarians

always called him Jack. He was a very controversial character. He lived over there on Cheney Street, but he really developed that park, and that park was located just east of where the Wells Cargo is located now.

*So it was on Fourth Street?*

On Fourth Street, right, and about half way between Reno and Sparks, and a very popular park on Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays. He not only played there, but he was generous to this degree. He let the university use his park. He let the American Legion use his park and was very generous in that respect, and he kept that park in perfect condition. That playing field was excellent.

*And he had grass on the infield?*

Right, had grass, and he ran the concessions and this sort of thing.

*Did he charge . . . ?*

He charged admission. I don't remember what admission was. I think fifty cents or a dollar at that time. And the players weren't paid, but they were given jobs. Then all the gate receipts went into a bucket, and at the end of the season the players split the gate receipts. So they'd come out with two or three hundred dollars, which was good money in those days.

*Well, when he brought in the teams from the Bay area or from California, he'd have to guarantee them so much money?*

Yes, he'd guarantee so much, and they'd stay overnight in the local hotels, and so forth, and through his connection with Ro-



tary, he'd get them a break on their overnight stay. And usually they'd come up and play a game Saturday night and Sunday. Saturday night under the lights, and then a Sunday afternoon game. He drew very well, drew good crowds.

*What would very well be, like five hundred people?*

Yes, he'd draw five hundred people. Then they played an exhibition game. I like to remember this one. One of his players, Mike India, came down with tuberculosis and eventually passed away, but Jack played a benefit game that drew over a thousand people, around fifteen hundred people for the Mike India Benefit Game. And in that game Jack Threlkel played against an All-Star team of all the teams around here from northern California, Fallon, Lovelock, and they brought in the cream of the crop of that Sierra Nevada League, from northern California, and those were all college players that each of those teams had out of Saint Mary's and Cal, Santa Clara. All those were good teams, and Jack Threlkel played them, and I pitched against them.

*You pitched against them?*

I pitched against them.

*You were on the All-Star team?*

The best of the cream of the crop, now.

*You pitched for Threlkel or for the All-Star?*

I pitched for Threlkel. And I went seven innings with no hits. Seven innings, a no-hitter. Struck out thirteen. And Lou Barkley came to bat, and I got three strikes on him, and the umpire called the third strike a ball. And even Lou threw down his bat and

started to walk away. [laughter] The umpire called it a ball, and Lou came back up again and got a base hit. [laughing] And there went my no-hitter. [laughter] But that raised a lot of money for Mike India, who was in the hospital down in California, and it was a fund raiser to raise money for that event.

*What year do you think that was?*

That was probably 1940.

*Did Threlkel ever play himself when he was a young man?*

No. Never did. But the first years, like the early 1930s, he coached and hit batting . . .

*Infield?*

. . . infield, yes. He did that. I understand that as a player himself, he was a very good player in his day.

*Oh, he did play when he was young?*

Yes, but that had to go back to the 1920s and so forth.

*Was he the field manager then? Did he make the line-ups up and everything?*

He made the line-up and sat out on a chair out in front of the dugout and gave the signals from there. [laughter] He enjoyed it; that was his life. And when it came time to replace a light bulb, Jack would climb the light pole and put the lights in. [laughter] He did everything. But that ballpark was his baby. That was his whole life.

*So you played for him for several years, then?*

Oh, yes. I played for him when I was in college. Then after I came back from Battle Mountain I played for him. Oh, I played for him through the early 1940s, and then he leased the park to the Reno Larks. The Reno Larks was run by Norrie DeLorenzi and Bob Peccole, and they worked at the Palace Club, and the Palace Club and Norrie DeLorenzi and Peccole—they financed the team, new uniforms, and the Larks carried on in playing in the Sagebrush League, and bringing in these top teams from California.

*So Threlkel gave up baseball, then?*

He gave it up, leased the park, and he was out of it.

*But didn't he come back again into baseball, then?*

No, that was the end, as far as Threlkel was concerned. He was getting old. He'd come out to the games, but he didn't sit in the dugout or have anything to do with that. And about that same time, the army out at the Stead Air Base was using his field, also. And some of the Lark players were from the Stead Air Base. So the team at that time consisted of college players, semi-pro players, and Stead Air Base players. They had a good ball club. They brought in some good teams.

*Were you on that team?*

Yes, I was on that team. And now we are in the early 1940s, and it was from that team that I went to the Coast League in 1944.

*What was the Threlkel's team called? Was it called the Threlkel's Cubs, or the Threlkel's Reno Garage?*

Reno Garage. Yes.

*Do you ever remember that name, the Cubs, Threlkel's Cubs?*

Yes, it does ring a bell.

*Did he ever sponsor a team of younger kids, like an American Legion team?*

Yes, he did. And they always used his park. And they had some very strong Legion teams in, too. At one time I coached some of the Legion teams. And on that Legion team was Fran Cassinelli and Orin Snyder and Link Piazza. Oh, four or five years I coached the Legion *and* the high school. A lot of them were the same players. See, we'd finish our high school season, then they'd play Legion during the summer. Buddy Garfinkle played on that, Ken Fujii and the Elcanos.

*The Reno Larks played in 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, and Threlkel had nothing to do with them?*

No.

*Would it be possible that maybe after the war he started a team again?*

I am almost sure he did. Yes, I believe he did. And you've brought back some memories now. I know while I was playing in the Coast League, Threlkel's park was going strong. I don't know who was running it, or what the situation was, but I know it was going strong.

*And this would have been in 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947?*

Right. And when I was playing in the Coast League, a lot of those guys that had played against Threlkel, they'd heckle me from the dugout, "Hey, you didn't play like that for Threlkel!" [laughter] "Does Jack still run a team up there?" And they'd give you that, see. And another humorous thing when I was playing in the Coast League is Lefty O'Doul was great at trying to break your concentration out there when you were pitching. He'd coach at third, and he'd talk to you, ask you all kinds of questions, so you'd forget about your job, see. [laughter]

He'd say, "Hey, Bud, you still teaching school up there?"

I'd say, "I'll check with you after the game, Lefty." But he'd try to get me in a conversation. [laughter] And he was very good at it. The other pitchers on our staff, he could do it. He could get them completely forgetting about the batter, and they'd carry on a conversation with him. [laughter]

*Well, you never played for Lefty O'Doul, though? You played against him?*

I only played for him for one game. We played Folsom Prison, and we combined the Sacramento Solons and the Seals, combined the teams and played the Folsom Prison. It was a charity event of some kind. And Lefty O'Doul managed that game. So that was the only time.

*Well, let's stay with the Reno semi-pro for awhile. You played baseball for the fraternity leagues at the University of Nevada, and then you played semi-pro for Threlkel.*

On Sundays, right. We played in the inter-fraternity league during the week. And then five or six of those inter-fraternity guys would play for Jack on Sunday, see, like Jack Hill and Dan

Ronnow and Jake Lawlor and Oscar Freitag and the Peccoles. Then we'd play in the inter-fraternity league during the week, play for Jack on Sundays.

*Did you play for any other semi-pro team?*

Yes. At the same time. [laughter] At about the same time I was also playing softball in a very good softball league that we had in Idlewild Park. Jack wouldn't let his players play softball *and* hardball, so we'd play under an assumed name in softball, and we thought we were really fooling Jack. [laughter] One time I played softball on Monday and Tuesday night, maybe, and when he announced the line-up in Sunday's game, he gave my softball name. [laughter]

*Fictitious name?*

"Blake" was playing first base today, see. [laughter] For Jack I played first base and pitched. The first two or three years, played just first base. And then I think how I started pitching for him was the pitcher got thrown out of the game, and he brought me in from first base to pitch. From then on I was pitching instead of playing first base.

*So in the fraternity leagues you played first base?*

Pitched and played first base.

*Pitched and played first base. Were there any other teams that you played for?*

Oh, yes. Now, what all of us were doing, though, was we'd go play one game, like for Susanville. We'd go play, maybe, one game for Fallon, and they'd hire us and pay us twenty-five or thirty

dollars just to pitch that one game for them. And even the prison wanted me to pitch one game for them, and the warden wouldn't let me. He said, "No, you have to be a prisoner in here to play on this team." But then I went up to Susanville and played a couple of games up there, and I went to Fallon one time and played for them at Moana a couple of games. They'd hire you for just that one game.

*Did they hire others?*

Yes, they did that with quite a few of the players.

*Not just pitchers?*

Darrel Reynolds—he played for everybody at some time or other.

*And he was a pitcher?*

No, he was an outfielder. And Frank Archuleta did that, too. He'd play for different teams at different times. So we all did it. They'd hire you for just one game. Like, maybe, Fallon wanted to be sure they beat Lovelock. And a lot of betting on the games, too.

*Oh. Did you play under an assumed name there?*

No.

*Or did everybody know you, anyhow?*

No, because they didn't care. So those games I played against Yakima. Yakima, an all-colored team from Washington, were going to play Susanville, Fourth of July or something, and they

wanted more. They wanted to beat them. So they hired Smiley Clayton, a black catcher, and myself to go up and pitch that one game. I think I got forty or fifty bucks for that one.

*Oh. Did you beat them?*

Beat them, yes. Beat them.

*Did you ever have any double or nothing? We'll give you twenty-five if you lose, and fifty if you win?*

Yes, you'd get those, too. I got one of those in Fallon one time. [laughing] I'll never forget one game I played in Fallon, and I was pitching for Lovelock against Fallon, and Lovelock hadn't beaten Fallon, and they wanted to be sure they beat Fallon this day. And the umpire . . . I don't remember who it was. Seems to me like it was Danny Evans. But the umpire told me before the game, he said, "There's no way you're going to win today." He said, "Fallon has to win."

A guy would be out at first, and he'd call him safe. Three strikes on the batter—they're calling them balls, you know. At first, I'm moaning about it, and then he called me to one side. He said, "Hey, this thing's fixed. There's a lot of money bet on it, and there's no way you are going to win. So you might as well just relax and enjoy it." [laughter]

So I did. I'd just throw it in there, let them hit, see. And Fallon is pouring it on me. And finally I went back into the stands. I was at bat, but I turned around and went back to the stands and said, "Boo me all you want to, I don't care. You guys paid to get in here, and I'm getting part of the money." So I don't care who wins. [laughter] A lot of stuff like that happened, even at Jack Threlkel's. He hired the umpires, you know, so he's tough to beat when he hires the umpires. [laughter]



*Oh, he got a little edge! Who were some of the famous ballplayers that came here to Reno, then?*

Satchel Paige pitched at Moana, and Jackie Robinson came, and to draw a crowd they had Jackie Robinson race a horse there from home plate to right field.

*Oh, he raced a horse?*

Yes, he raced a horse, and the horse darn near ran over him, but he beat the horse to first base, but from first base on, the horse beat him. [laughter]

*That was at Moana or at Threlkel's?*

That was at Moana, and Satchel Paige was at Moana. Cookie Lavagetto played up here, and the House of David, of course, played both at Moana and Jack Threlkel's.

*Did any major league team ever play here, that you recall?*

No. So far as I know, no major league team ever played here. But the Sacramento Solons came up and played a game at Moana. They played the Silver Sox, though. And both Bob Snyder and I were home. We were out of the Western International, though, and we pitched against the Sacramento Solons for the Reno Silver Sox and beat them. [laughter] That brought down the house. Of course, as well you know, frequently, when a major league team, or a Coast League team played, they didn't always play the cream of the crop, the best players.

When I was playing for Sacramento and we were on our way up to play Seattle, they stopped at Wenatchee to play, because it was a farm club of Sacramento. We stopped at Wenatchee to play

an exhibition game just to draw a crowd for Wenatchee. And we played our players all over different positions. Outfielders pitched, and pitchers played the outfield. [laughter] But they thought they were playing the Sacramento Solons. Even one of our stockholders got in uniform to play first base. [laughter] But they thought they were playing the real McCoy. And I was pitching that game, and I'm burnt up, because I don't want to get beat by Wenatchee. [laughing] And here our guys are just having fun and playing different positions, and we're not scoring any runs. [laughter]

*Having a good time, but you're not scoring any runs.*

About the third or fourth inning the score is nothing to nothing. [laughter] And I'm, "Hey, come on, guys, get some runs for me." And they're laughing. They think this is funny. [laughter] And I don't want to get beat by Wenatchee.

*We talked about semi-professional baseball, and some of the guys would get paid for certain games.*

Right.

*Weren't there a lot of players that didn't get any money at all?*

Yes, that's true, particularly, if you were in a home town. Like Darrell Reynolds, up from Saint Mary's, he'd get paid, where, maybe, the local Lovelock guy didn't get paid. [laughter] So, there was a certain friction there. And you have to remember, too, if you got ten bucks, hey, that wasn't bad, for that particular time.

*So a lot of the smaller towns, especially, like Lovelock, they might have seven or eight guys, or six or seven guys that didn't get paid, just played for the fun of it.*

Right. Or frequently, they'd have a big feed after the game that the town would sponsor. Or they got some benefits, over, above, and beyond. And jobs. The local kids would get jobs with those teams.

*So you had big dinners, or sometimes you'd get free beer and stuff, or dinners after ball games?*

Right, and Threlkel would do that, too. At the end of the season he'd throw a big banquet, maybe a bean feed or a spaghetti feed or something.

*Where would he hold it?*

At his house. Once in awhile, maybe at a downtown club. Like at the Columbo Hotel.

*Toscanos?*

Toscanos or something like that. Yes.

*You mentioned once that you went to Susanville with . . . ?*

Smiley Clayton, the catcher.

*Yes. He was African American?*

Yes. And a very good catcher, smart—could hit—good arm, very good.

*So you went up to Susanville, and you won the game. Then did you have a dinner or something after the game?*

Right. And then Scott Motors had a team that played at the old Moana Ball Park, when they didn't have lights yet—the Old Moana Ball Park. And they had two Afro-American players: Scott, a black pitcher, and Smiley Clayton, the catcher. But Scott Motors had a very good team, and Threlkel wasn't too anxious to play them, either.

*What was the name of their pitcher?*

Scott. I don't remember his first name.

*So Scott played for Scott Motors?*

Yes.

*Because there weren't too many blacks around Reno.*

Right, very few.

*I don't remember any.*

I don't think Jack Threlkel ever had any, but some of the other semi-pro teams around had them.

*I guess there just weren't that many living in the area. It wasn't any prejudice or anything.*

True. Even at the University of Nevada, there were none on football or basketball teams. Marion Motley was among the first. They had a problem with housing. When the University of Nevada would play some teams, they wouldn't house the Nevada team, because they had a black player.

*Well, there just weren't that many living in the area at the time.*

Right.

*You mentioned earlier that Threlkel stopped baseball for some reason in 1941, 1942, 1943, in that area, and there was a team called the Reno Larks that played.*

Right. They probably gave him a pretty good price to lease the park, and then he was getting a little older, so he leased the park to them. They were a well-financed team, because the Palace Club was financing it, also.

*Did any of the other bars or casinos sponsor teams during that time frame?*

Mostly softball. Harolds Club had a very strong softball team. They brought in Lefty Creech, and I can't remember the other one. But Harolds had probably one of the top softball teams in the nation. They brought guys in from the outside, of course. But the Hollister Cowboys were World's Champions, and they played here. And Harolds probably had one of the strongest softball teams in the nation. They played at Idlewild Park—and night lights—and softball was very popular in the 1930s in the Reno area.

*And into the 1940s.*

Yes, right.

*Did the Harolds softball team tour around the different towns?*

Yes, they traveled, also. Back to Moana—the first Moana Park faced just the opposite. Where third base is now was home plate in the first Moana Park. Then, they tore that park down and built the present . . . or not the present Moana Park, but now they put in lights.

*Is this the third Moana Park, then, or the second?*

Yes, this is at least the third. But strong semi-pro teams were using it. The Sagebrush League used it; the university used it; the American Legion used it; and it now became a challenge to Threlkel's Park. It had lights and so forth.

*Didn't Moana Park, one of them, burn down, one time?*

I think it did. I'm not sure, but I think it did.

*I think it was later, maybe.*

Bill Berrum, who was a former player and student of mine, now treasurer, his folks owned the Moana Ball Park, and he was the bat boy for a lot of these teams. So he could give you a lot of information on the old Moana Park.

*So the Berrums owned it? And they'd charge?*

Right. I think another thing that got Threlkel out of baseball was when the California State League started and the first pro team was in here. Now, people began to turn to Moana and sort of desert Threlkel. I think that's another reason Threlkel could see the handwriting on the wall. And that first California State League team that came in, they all had major league sponsors, and that may be where you got the idea that the major leagues were moving in here. They moved into the California State League, and Stockton and Fresno and Reno all had major league furnishing them ballplayers. They supposedly trained, too, for ballplayers that were going to the majors, and that began to happen. A lot of these local players now began to move on up to the major leagues.

*And then there was another league, right? What was that called?*

Sunset League. Doomed almost from day one, because the travel was just way out. They'd play in Mexicali, Mexico, and Klamath Falls, Oregon, and some team in Washington. They didn't have a natural drawing area, and that team folded in a hurry, financially. They just couldn't make it. One of my old catchers managed the team in there.

They played at Moana. Lilio Marcucci was managing the team, and they had gone to Mexicali to play, and when they got to Mexicali the team had folded. [laughter] So now there's nobody to play. So their next game was at Salinas, though, so they're on their way from Mexicali to Salinas, and I think the Salinas team folded. And for two or three days the team was lost. Nobody knew where they were. [laughing]

*They didn't have any money?*

They were somewhere between Mexicali and Salinas. [laughter] Lilio Marcucci was the manager of the team, and the Giants were sponsoring that team. It was the Reno team playing at Moana, and they did their spring training in El Centro, California. The Giants bigwigs came there to El Centro, and I went down, because Marcucci, my catcher, was the manager.

*He caught you or Sacramento?*

Yes. I went down to watch his team play down there then. Dutch Reuther was representing the Giants, and he was there and doing nothing but drinking. [laughter] But they had another coach from the Giants that was there coaching the team, but I'll never forget that Dutch Reuther. All he did . . .

*Was drink?*

Yes, drink up the Giants' money. [laughter]

*There was a gentleman named Frank Rudy, who leased the Moana ballpark in the 1940s.*

I knew of him, but I didn't know him personally.

*You mention Oscar Freitag. Oscar Freitag was a University of Nevada boy?*

Yes.

*What happened to him?*

He came up from California, from the Berkeley area, and played at the university. Brought up there primarily for basketball, but he played in that inter-fraternity league. Then he played for Jack Threlkel and went into business here in Reno, passed away several years ago, but the Freitag that was the city attorney for Sparks is Oscar Freitag's son. Oscar was a very prominent name in semi-ball here and came up from the Bay area to play basketball for Doc Martie at the university.

*A lot of these people that came up here as athletes, including yourself and myself, wound up staying in the Reno area.*

Oh, yes. My first six months in Reno I didn't like it. Boy, these barren hills! When I came from out of the redwoods and the ocean, you know . . . this got to me. [laughter] But it grows on you. This area grows on you. There's something about it that I really like, and I've been very happy here. The town has been very good to me.

*And vice versa.*

Yes. [laughter] Well, I hope.



*OK. How about Tommy Hill? Was he a local boy?*

Yes. Tommy Hill originated in Tonopah but came to Sparks High School and was a star athlete at Sparks High School, a star at the University of Nevada in football, baseball, track. Outstanding. He is in the Nevada Hall of Fame, and a great competitor, as was Jake Lawlor.

*Jake Lawlor—did he come from out of state?*

Yes, he came from Iowa and came out here to play football and baseball and basketball. Great athlete at the University of Nevada, but a mean guy, a win-at-any-cost type of guy. [laughter] He didn't care how he won, so long as he won.

In college Jake was rough and tough and won at any cost. He didn't keep training and went on eventually to play in the Coast League. He played with Hollywood in the Coast League for awhile, and then he got in trouble down there; he was in a fight with somebody all the time. Got in trouble down there and came back to Reno.

Then, he was a highly successful coach in California in high school, a highly successful coach. Came back to Nevada, also a highly successful coach in Virginia City, but a real rounder, a real rebel. Then, when he coached basketball at the University of Nevada, he was a highly successful basketball coach, and a mean, rough, tough guy. Challenged his players and really rode them, but they had a healthy respect for him. In his latter years, though, he began to mellow. He changed quite a bit; he was going to church and had a son and got to be a rather nice guy. [laughter] An entirely different guy than his past.

And he was my catcher, also, with Threlkel. I had half a dozen catchers for Threlkel, though, at different times. But Jake caught that game that I told you about, the Mike India game. And Jake told me, too, that Barkley had struck out. And the odd part about

it, Barkley even threw his bat down and started toward the dugout. [laughter] Then came back and got the base hit. But Jake was an entirely different guy the last ten years of his life, than he was the first twenty years of his life. [laughter] But I developed a healthy respect for him, and the guy was a fabulous coach.

*We should mention, for those that don't know, that Lawlor Events Center, of course, is named after Jake Lawlor.*

Right, and a justly deserved award. He deserved it. I have another story on Jake Lawlor. I'm tagged up at third base, and Jake is catching, and they hit a long fly ball to the outfield, and I tag up, and I'm coming home, and Jake now has the ball, though, but when he took to throw from the outfield, it pulled him off of home plate, about eight or ten feet. So he is eight or ten feet down the third base line, and I'm coming in, and knowing Jake as I do, said, "Hey, I'm not going to get home plate!" So Jake's got the ball down on the ground, ten feet down the third base line, and I fake the slide, and dive over him and land on home plate, and he hasn't touched me yet! I get up, and I'm dusting the dust off and walking toward the dugout, and he takes the ball and hits me in the back—just throws it at me. [laughter] So that's the kind of guy Jake Lawlor was. Very competitive.

*We mentioned Frank Archuleta a couple of times. Was he a local boy?*

Yes, he was local. I think he was born and raised here, and I don't remember where he went to high school, but he was very good in American Legion ball, and very good playing for Threlkel, and then he played in that Sagebrush League for a half a dozen different teams. But he was a competitor, and very good.

*How about Mike Salanesian?*

Mike Salanesian was formerly in the New York Yankee chain. He was working a job here, working for the Reno Garage, and playing first base and pitching for the Reno Garage, in the 1930s. And then later, Mike Salanesian was on the local police force; he was a policeman here for years and years after he quit playing ball.

*So he's another guy that stayed in town?*

Right. And at one time, he played in the Yankee chain.

*I think Mike is still living here in Reno, isn't he, or have you heard?*

I tried to find out about Mike. If he's here, he's got to be in his late nineties, because he was quite a bit older than I was, and I'm not sure he's still alive.

*How about Dan Ronnow?*

Dan Ronnow, a Nevada boy, but not a Reno boy. He came from someplace like Pioche or like that, came to the university to play basketball with Doc Martie. He played basketball for the university, played in that inter-fraternity league, then played for Jack Threlkel, and then he too played for Lovelock, Fallon, different teams in that Sagebrush League. Great competitor.

*Well, how about a guy named Charlie Eastland?*

Charlie Eastland played with the Larks and played with Jack Threlkel. First baseman, good hitter, and very congenial, an amiable guy. To my way of thinking, definitely a pro ballplayer. He could have played in the Coast League, and as well you know, a lot of times it's getting the right break at the right time, and you go, or you don't go, but Charlie Eastland was very good, as was

Stan Lloyd. Fran Cassinelli, who you mentioned earlier, was a center fielder. As far as their fielding was concerned, they were pro ballplayers.

*How about Alf Sorensen?*

Alf Sorensen—I'm glad you brought his name up. The Alf Sorensen Recreation Center in Sparks is named after him, and I'm the one that got the Sparks City Council to name the Alf Sorensen Center. Fantastic athlete—football, basketball, baseball, boxing, track—he could do it all and was outstanding. And sometime in our interview you must bring up the subject of Eleven Old Men, the football team that played here in the Reno area—all former college players—and Alf Sorensen played on that team. Just a fantastic guy and a fantastic athlete, and his life cut short, of course, by an automobile accident. He also officiated sports long after he gave up athletics himself.

*Was he a local boy?*

Local boy, Sparks High School, and Sparks resident, but very, very prominent, both on the university campus, and then after college he contributed to this semi-pro league, and the Eleven Old Men football team, and later officiating.

*Was he killed in an automobile accident attending a sports event?*

Well, he was injured in the accident and never fully recovered from that, but he made many, many friends—friends with his teammates and the teams he played against. Everybody had a healthy respect for Alf Sorensen. I played with and against him, and admire him, and consider him one of the finest athletes I ever played with or against.

*Is that right? That's quite a compliment.*

Well, he was such an all-the-way-around . . . he did it all, and it never went to his head. He was a down-to-earth guy.

*How about Al Lansdon?*

Al Lansdon? Yes, I played with and against Al Lansdon. He, I would say, was a good, all-the-way-around athlete, but his greatest contribution was his interest in youth activities after he finished his own career. He did a lot for Little League baseball and spent a lot of time and money on Little League programs. And then his son—also a great athlete, particularly in gymnastics—for a long while coached the Reno Gymnastic Team here.

*And his first name is what? Is it Dale?*

I know it backwards and forwards. Seems to me like it was, but he made a great contribution to gymnastics, was very good himself, and a local boy, Reno High, but his contribution was primarily in gymnastics.

*Al Lansdon's son?*

Al Lansdon's son.

*And Al was strongest in Little League, youth baseball?*

Right.

*He was a UNR graduate too, wasn't he?*

Yes, he played for the University of Nevada, played football and basketball and played in that inter-fraternity league.

*How about Buddy Garfinkle?*

Buddy Garfinkle? Ah, I know him well. He played American Legion ball for me, played football and basketball for me at Reno High, played for Jack Threlkel, played in that Strong Industrial League, became a principal of one of the grammar schools, first at Peavine, then principal of Hug High, and is now retired, living at Lake Tahoe.

*How about Joe and Paul Elcano?*

Both graduates of Reno High, both deeply involved in athletics at Reno High. Paul is a retired attorney, Joe, a retired businessman. Joe is on the board of directors of the Alumni Association. And both very prominent.

*Good semi-pro baseball players?*

Right. Mostly semi-pro baseball—and, incidentally, both fairly good golfers, too. And Paul was an outstanding golfer and an outstanding softball player.

*Do you recall a little bit further back, Andy Marcinko?*

Andy Marcinko? Yes, I'll never forget Andy. Important in the gaming industry at Harrah's for many, many years, and University of Nevada football and baseball, and very, very prominent in this semi-pro league. He played for Threlkel as an outfielder, great hitter—fairly good fielder, but great hitter. In a twelve-inning game one time, we had a tied score, twelfth inning, and a hot, summer, Sunday day for Jack Threlkel. I'm pitching, and, hey, I'm running out of gas out there, and when I came in, in our half of the inning, I said, "Hey, somebody, get a run! I don't know whether I'm going back there again, or not."

Andy said, "I'll take care of it." He comes to bat and hits one out of the park. We win the game.

*That sounds just like Andy, "I'll take care of it."*

That's Andy. Great sense of humor, and a great guy when he was working for Harrah's. He was a great guy for free meals. Boy! [laughter]

*He gave them away?*

I never paid for a meal when Andy was in charge there. [laughter] Neither did anyone else.

*He was a big spender of Bill Harrah's money?*

Oh, he was a big spender of Bill Harrah's money. [laughing] Right. And another guy like that was Buster McClure. He played football, of course, for the University of Nevada, and then he played in that Industrial League.

*Softball or baseball?*

Baseball. And noted for football more than anything else. His two sons played for me at Reno High.

*Would that be Willy or . . . ?*

Tom and Bob Jr. But then Buster was a catcher, also, and Buster was heavily connected with the Holiday Hotel, downtown Holiday. And he was very good at spending their money. [laughter] Took care of all the athletes that came up here.

*There's another one of an earlier era, Lou Barkley.*

Yes. Lou, a graduate of Reno High, played for me, played Legion ball for me, played with and against me, and a great guy. Went into business, was deeply involved with McDonalds for awhile. And, by the way, that reminds me, too, of Luther Mack, the present owner of about seven McDonalds, and the boxing commissioner for the state of Nevada. He's a Reno High graduate and one of my boys. But back to Lou Barkley. Lou Barkley had a sister, too. I can't remember her name offhand.

*Llewellyn?*

I think so, yes. She was a great track star out of the Sacramento area. So the Barkley family, they made their name in athletics, as well as business.

*Let's talk about Mike Schon.*

Mike Schon, graduate of Reno High, local boy, raised here in Reno, played baseball at Reno High, played American Legion ball. Played for Threlkel, one time, I think, played pro ball, was in the Dodger organization at one time. At present he is the tour guide at the Opera House at Virginia City.

*Is that right?*

He has written several stories and poems, so he's an author and an ex-baseball player and now quite knowledgeable on the history of Virginia City.

*Let's talk about Bob Snyder of the Snyder family.*

Oh yes, the Snyder family. The Snyder family, the whole family ballplayers. Pop Snyder, a catcher.



*His name was Bob, right?*

Bob Snyder. Yes. Well, we called him Pop. I never did know what his first name was, but he played in the 3-I League, moved out to Nevada here, played for every team in that Industrial League. Played for every team in there and was my catcher at one time, and his son, Bob Snyder, played here locally in the semi-pro league, played for Threlkel, also. He played in the Western International with two or three teams up there, but I knew him as a teammate of mine with Vancouver. And then Orin Snyder, the youngest of the Snyders, played for Reno High, played American Legion, played for Threlkel, played in this Industrial League. He played for the Larks at one time, played for Vancouver in the Western International and was an outfielder up there, and is living here locally now. He was employed as a pit boss in one of the clubs. I think the club out north of town was his last job.

*The Bonanza.*

Yes. But he's still living here locally, goes to the university games, and I see him frequently. He played football, basketball, and baseball at Reno High and was an outstanding athlete. Yes.

*Ernie Kleppe?*

Yes. Let's talk about the Kleppe brothers. There were three brothers, I think, that all played basketball. A local family, played at Sparks High mostly. Ernie became a county commissioner and a rancher and played a lot of baseball locally in that semi-pro league and in the Sagebrush League. Then, I am more familiar with his son, though, John Kleppe, who played baseball for me and played American Legion ball, and I think he played for Jack Threlkel at one time, and is now Dr. John Kleppe, of the engineering department at the University of Nevada.

*There's a Kleppe Lane in Sparks.*

Yes, that's named after the Kleppe family. And that ranch was located down where the sewer plant is now located, and they had a big ranch down there.

*I remember a fellow named Wimpy Rupp, as an umpire. I guess he was a player, also.*

Yes, by all means, we must talk about Wimpy Rupp. Wimpy Rupp, a local boy who played some basketball, city league basketball. Then he also played baseball in this semi-pro league and ended his career umpiring and refereeing. He was famous for his umpiring, and he umpired both softball and baseball and was one of the outstanding officials here.

*How about the Riordan brothers, Lefty and Bill Riordan? Did you ever play with them?*

I played against them. Not with them, but I played against them, and they were both extremely good in semi-pro ball. They were on the All-Star team every year, and both outstanding semi-pro ballplayers. And they are two others that I consider definitely professional baseball players, had they gotten the break and gone into it. And seems to me like they did have try-outs at different times with pro teams, but they definitely should be mentioned, if baseball is mentioned.

*How about the Peccole brothers?*

The Peccoles first connected with the University of Nevada. I'm not sure whether Bob graduated, but he attended and played baseball up there. Bill played football, basketball, and baseball. His outstanding sport was baseball, however. He graduated from

the university, was a *very* good player, outstanding player in that inter-fraternity league. Then, both played for Jack Threlkel; both played in that Western International League. And Bob, of course, along with Norrie DeLorenzi, was a sponsor and manager of the Reno Larks. Bob went into business, at one time was connected with gaming at the McCarran House. And Bill moved to Las Vegas, went into real estate and insurance, made a fortune, and he is the one that gave the baseball program at the University of Nevada their big jump by donating that field.

*So that's who Peccole field is named after, Bill Peccole.*

Right. And he donated at least a quarter of a million dollars toward that program. Passed away just a year or so ago in Las Vegas.

*Do you remember a fellow named Lee DeLauer?*

Yes, I do. I first met Lee when he was attending the University of Nevada, and he was extremely active in baseball at the university. Then he did a lot of playing in that old Sagebrush League and semi-pro baseball around Reno. He must have played for half a dozen different teams. Lee considered himself, and rightly so, an authority on baseball. To this day he swears that he knows the game as well as anyone, and he probably does. At least, he had a lot of playing experience. Great guy with a great personality, always a big smile. And after baseball, golf became his game, but, I remember, a real sportsman, and a real competitor. If you were pitching against him, which I have, he was tough.

*What position did he play?*

He played everything. He was an outfielder and an infielder, never a pitcher or catcher that I know of, but in order to get in the game, he'd play anything.

*How about a fellow named Pat Francellini? He later shortened his name to France?*

Yes. Pat played at the university and played a lot of semi-pro. Then he was very active in baseball at Lake Tahoe and was a great promoter when he was at Lake Tahoe with Harrah's, I believe. He was a great promoter of golf. Between Lee and Pat they set up the original celebrity sports tournament up there. And in those days, though, instead of bringing in the pro-golfers and that sort of thing, they brought in the coaches in Nevada and outstanding athletes in Nevada, and matched them with the entertainment at the lake. I remember in one of those tournaments we played up there, Link Piazza was in that, also, and Jake Lawlor, and Jim Olivas was in there, and quite a few of the coaches. The high school coaches and college coaches here were always in that tournament. We were in there one time with Rollie Fingers, and we were in there with Nat "King" Cole, and in those days it was a tournament of the entertainers and the outstanding athletes in northern Nevada here. But that was a tournament that we always looked forward to. We'd play the tournament and then have dinner that night at Harrah's expense, thanks to Pat and to Lee DeLauer. It was something we enjoyed year after year.

*What position did Pat play when he played ball?*

He played infield and outfield. I don't recall his ever pitching or catching, but like Lee, he was a good player.

*And a good hitter.*

Yes, a great competitor. The thing I remember most about him, though, was his promotion of baseball. He did a lot for baseball in the high school up there.

*And Little League?*

And Little League, right. Very active in that. Baseball owes a lot to guys like that. He was quite a guy.

*I don't know if we mentioned Al Lansdon or not.*

Yes. We talked about Al. Al was particularly active in Little League. I would say, along with Dick Taylor, they did more to promote Little League ball than anyone I know of in this area. They kept it alive back in those days, and out of that Little League that they had came a lot of high school and American Legion players and college players. They got their start in that Little League with Al.

*Go back a few more years to a fellow named Syl Gregory. I believe you played with him.*

Yes, I played with Syl with the Reno Garage, and Syl was definitely a pro ballplayer. I don't know how they missed, but I played with a lot of shortstops in the Coast League that couldn't carry Syl's glove. The last I heard of him, he was in Las Vegas and very active in baseball down there, but in his years with Threlkel, one of the best shortstops that we ever had.

*What year did he play?*

He was with Threlkel in the 1940s. He was there a little after Freitag, I believe, but an outstanding shortstop with a great arm. When I was playing first base for Jack Threlkel, boy, those throws really got over there. And a good hitter. He could hit, run, field, had all the tools for a major league ballplayer, and why he didn't go, I'll never know.

*Was he a local fellow, then?*

No, he wasn't. Threlkel brought him in, as Threlkel's custom was to bring in ballplayers. Threlkel's going to win no matter what it costs, and no matter how. [laughter]

*You had another short stop named Tony Gomez?*

Oh, yes.

*Did he play before or after Gregory?*

I'm glad you brought Tony up. Tony played before Freitag and before Gregory. Tony was brought up from San Francisco. He played in that very fast, semi-pro league in Oakland in the Bay area, in general, and they brought him up from there. And he was a great friend of the Menante family. I think he boarded and roomed with the Menante's. They sort of took care of him. The last time I saw Tony was when I was playing with the Stockton Old-Timers. We played against the San Francisco Old-Timers. And Tony was playing with them then—silver white hair and just a great guy, great personality. Another pro ballplayer, I think he had a shot with the San Francisco Seals during O'Doul's day. Whether he made it, or whether his job was more important than baseball, I don't know, but I would certainly say that Gomez was a class ballplayer.

*Well, during that time frame, of course, World War II started in 1941, so a lot of those fellows maybe went into the service, and that altered their career.*

Right. Definitely.

*By the time you got out, you were too old to play, sometimes.*

Right.

*Who were some of the managers of the teams, and how was it determined who was going to be a manager? I know Threlkel, of course, was manager of the Reno Garage. Who was the manager when you played with the Reno Larks, for example?*

With the Reno Larks it was Norrie DeLorenzi who was connected with the Palace Club. He was one of the bosses, I think, of the Palace Club. And Bob Peccole of the famous Peccole brothers and the Peccole Field at the university. Bob Peccole was a dealer at the Palace Club, and they put their money into the Reno Larks. They leased the park from Threlkel and bought all new uniforms and had a very strong team that played independently and also played in that Sagebrush League.

*Did they plan to make money off of that team, or was it just a chance to play ball?*

No, I don't believe. It was just like Threlkel; it was just their interest in baseball. It wasn't a money-making thing for them. I think they figured if they broke even, great. And Threlkel, the same way. It wasn't a business as far as Threlkel was concerned, although, he used it to advertise his business. But I think baseball owes a great deal to Norrie DeLorenzi and Bob Peccole and to Jack Threlkel. Eccentric character that he was, he was really a promoter and spent a lot of money out of his own pocket to promote baseball.

Threlkel had his enemies, and he had his friends. I'll never forget Threlkel saying on one occasion, when I'd pointed out that they'd written an article against him in the paper, he said, "I don't care what they write." I thought it would upset him, but he said, "I don't care what they write, so long as they keep putting me in the paper." [laughter] So he was that type of guy.

*Why did they call the team the Reno Larks? Do you know who the Larks came from?*

No, I don't. I think they just wanted to divorce themselves from the Threlkel Garage name, because that had been so prominent that I think they wanted to get a new name and let everybody know, "This is our team, it's not Jack Threlkel's team," even though they're playing in his park. [laughter] And that may have been it, I don't know.

*Because it's kind of an unusual name for an athletic team, the Larks.*

Right. [laughter]

*So, a team from like, Lovelock, for example—and other towns did this too, of course—used to bring in ballplayers from Saint Mary's—Wes Bailey, a pitcher, and Darrel Reynolds, a shortstop, Lefty Creech, a pitcher. How did they get paid? Do you have any idea?*

Yes, they were paid by the merchants and by the gate receipt, and sometimes they were paid by the game, and sometimes it went into a pot, and at the end of the season they split the pot, paying off expenses, of course, and then, whatever was left, over and above expenses, went into the pot. That's definitely the way Threlkel operated.

*And probably Lovelock, too.*

Right. And the merchants heavily supported it. I'm glad you brought that up, because here's something that's difficult for us to realize today, that little towns like Susanville and Portola and Graeagle and Lovelock and Fallon—they had very, very good baseball players. Those guys were pros, actually, or the cream of the crop out of colleges, because baseball was so alive and so impor-



tant in those days that they made it a point to bring in the cream of the crop out of Cal and Saint Mary's and Santa Clara. And as well you know, back in those days Saint Mary's was practically a pro-ball club. A lot of those Saint Mary's ballplayers went into pro ball. So it's difficult today to realize that a town like Fallon or Portola or Lovelock could have that good a team. But today as I look back on it, any of those teams could have played in the California State League.

We called them semi-pro, because they weren't under actual contract, but they were all getting paid. Technically, they were pros, which made a lot of them ineligible going back to college. But because everybody was doing it, nobody said anything, you know. [laughter]

*Well, the only difference, probably, with the professional team was there wasn't a pitching depth. Usually, each team only got one or two good pitchers.*

Right. That's true. I'm glad you brought that up, because they didn't have the depth that those pro teams had, and you weren't signing an actual contract, necessarily.

*And you weren't playing six, seven days a week.*

That's a good point to mention. They were playing mostly weekends. Few teams had lights, so it was primarily Friday, Saturday, Sunday league, or a daytime league, anyway. But I think it's worthy of mentioning how good those teams really were.

*All these local teams like Fallon, and Portola and Susanville—who were some of their managers? Were they playing managers?*

Sometimes, both ways. Some years it would be a playing manager, like Goldy Holmes at Lovelock. I remember him well. And

then, the Archuletas at one time at Fallon. Evans, the pitcher at Fallon, was the pitcher and manager. And Jack Threlkel, of course, in Reno, and Bob Peccole of the Larks managed that team.

*Al Lansdon managed the Harrah's team.*

Al Lansdon, also, both played and managed. Then, finally he quit playing but did a lot of managing on different teams. Al Lansdon floated over the league. He probably played for every team in the league, other than Jack Threlkel. And then, I think, you mentioned once before that he came back to manage Threlkel's at one time, and that was probably after the war years that he did that, I'm not sure. But he had a deep interest in baseball, probably spent money out of his own pocket, as most of the managers did. But I would say the majority of the managers were not playing managers. They just had a deep interest. Banks out at Winnemucca was first a player, then a manager, and he was very good. And much credit should be given those guys, because in all cases they were spending money out of their own pocket, too, for the love of baseball. That was their baby.

*So, there were a lot of players on the team that weren't getting paid anything at all, just like local people.*

True.

*Then there were some that came from colleges?*

Right.

*And they got jobs and/or a little bit of money.*

Most of it, I believe, was a job situation. There at Lovelock, for instance, and Fallon, too, they got them jobs. I know several

of them worked at the warehouse, Morkham's Warehouse, in Fallon. In Lovelock some of them were on ranches, some of them in service stations. So they were eking out a living, and all of them in the hopes that this would open the door to pro ball for them. That was every kid's dream, of course.

I think once before we talked about Charlie Spina. Charlie Spina played baseball in high school, and basketball—very good at basketball—but he played baseball in high school, on to Saint Mary's, until Saint Mary's dropped baseball. Then he went into pro ball in the California State League, and he was playing for Visalia, or some team in southern Cal. But Spina was a strong family oriented kid. He had a family that was a very tight and very close-knit family. Rocco Spina [his father] was interested in athletics.

Also, Charlie was in love about the time he went into pro ball, and his love probably outweighed his love of the game. So he was on his way back. He was homesick and didn't like that bus travel around that we all went through at sometime or another. So Charlie was heading back home, and I got him a shot with Modesto on his way back. He would have made the Modesto ball club and stayed in pro ball, but he was in love, and being very close to his family, he didn't like the travel and being away from home and living out of a suitcase. [laughter] So Charlie gave up his baseball career and came back to teach and coach here in Reno.

*Well, he made a great career for himself in coaching and teaching.*

Yes, he did. Very good.

*I believe he was principal at Wooster High for awhile.*

He was hired. I don't know whether he was ever principal.

*Maybe vice-principal.*

Or athletic director, something like that. I know he was very instrumental in coaching there and was a good coach. He had a good career in coaching.

*Well, to get back to these college ballplayers, I think you brushed on it lightly. You feel a lot of them came up here to get experience while they were still in college.*

That's right. Then the good ballplayers in college, their chief incentive was that they were getting recognition, they were getting free board and room and an education and that scholarship. They were having a tough time, financially, but every college ballplayer, his dream is to someday make pro, and this was the stepping stone to get there. This was the open door, because more and more now the majors are beginning to pick up college players. Back in the Babe Ruth days, and Lou Gehrig, they were taking sandlot ballplayers. And back in those early 1920s there were darn few college players. I think that's one reason that Lou Gehrig got so much publicity, that, "Hey! There's a college guy playing in the majors." And very few of those major league players had come up from college, unlike today. Practically every major league ballplayer today is a college graduate or came up through the college ranks, and then the farm system. You move from college to the farm system and then on up to the majors, you hope. [laughter]

*There used to be a national semi-pro baseball tournament in Wichita, Kansas where all the states would send in their championship teams. Do you remember any teams from Nevada going to that national tournament?*

Yes. I don't remember the name of the team, but it was the team that Jim Pace played on. Bruce Pace's son played on that

team. And Bruce Pace, locally, a contractor today—he went back to Wichita with that team, and they did very well back there. I’m not sure whether they won or not, but they placed very high in that tournament.

*About what time frame would that be, what year?*

Oh, that would have to be, probably, in the late 1950s. But that was a very good ball club that they sent back there. I don’t recall the name of the team, but they picked up a few from over the league before they went, too, but I recall their going, and I recall scouting a couple of those players. I figured they had some high pro potential on that ball club, because that Wichita tournament was a fantastic tournament. The majors scouted that heavily.

*There’s a fellow that we haven’t talked about that played semi-pro baseball in the state of Nevada named Jim Eardley. Are you familiar with Jim?*

Yes, I know Jim well. Jim grew up in Ely, in the Ely-Ruth-McGill area, and played baseball out there. He brought a team in here when he was coaching one of the Ely teams, and I don’t know whether it was American Legion or the high school team or a town team. But he brought his team in here, and they did very well in the local tournament that we have. Then Jim came in to Reno at the university, and then he went from there to coaching at Reno High, and Jim was my assistant baseball coach at Reno High. After coaching at Reno High for two or three years, he wanted to quit and move on to someplace else. I liked him so well, and he was doing such a good job, that I discouraged that, and I said, “Well, Jim, you got a job here the rest of your life. What more do you want?” And we were discussing this at the end of the football season, and our job was to put the tarp up over the

football scoreboard for the winter. And Jim and I were out there, and I'm up on the ladder putting the tarp on, and Jim is steady-ing the ladder. And when I asked him, "Why don't you stay?"

He said, "I'll never get anyplace here. All the jobs are taken."

I said, "Well, Jim, what job would you like?"

And he said, "Your job."

I came down off of that ladder, and he wants my job! "I'll steady the ladder, and you get up there." [laughter] But I'm very proud of what Jim has accomplished, because he went from there on to community college and became President of Truckee Meadows Community College and on the Board of Regents, and he really went places that he really wanted to go. So I have great admiration for him, hated to lose him. He was an excellent assistant coach, and I really hated to lose him.

*But to wind up on the Board of Regents is quite an accomplishment.*

Right. [laughter] So Jim has really gone places. And I'm proud of what he's done; I'm proud of what he's accomplished. Jokingly, when I see him, though, I'll say, "Hey, now you were on my staff at Reno High, but when you got to be President of Truckee Meadows, you didn't take me up on your staff. How come?" [laughter]

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## BUD'S PITCHING STYLE

*I've read and heard it said that you had a unique windup and delivery when you were pitching. Could you describe it in words in any way? And how did you happen to develop such a style?*

I'm glad you brought that up. [laughter] I've been asked that question a dozen times. I don't know where I came up with the philosophy, whether it was from Doc Martie or Jake Lawlor, but I came up with the philosophy back in college that to be a good hitter you have to concentrate. Concentrate on that ball; concentrate on what you're doing. Dig your feet in; get your stance on balance. Somehow or other it came to me that I have to destroy that confidence. I have to attack that rhythm; I have to get your attention off of your hitting. So even when I was pitching for Threlkel, I did everything I could—a thousand different things—some that I have kept a secret up till now even. One is that I throw to first base, frequently, not to get the guy, but just to make the batter wait. And, also, I would change my delivery. One time I'd go through a fast pitching motion and deliver a change up. The next time I'd go through a slow motion and deliver a fast

ball. I got the idea that I had to beat you with my head, that some way or other I had to get your attention off of hitting. And it didn't make too much difference what you thought about me, so long as I'd distract your attention and your concentration.

I think the real thing came from Lefty O'Doul. I was a great admire of Lefty O'Doul. A fabulous knowledge of baseball. I used to listen to O'Doul as he was coaching the hitters, and I listened to everything he said. He was coaching them on how to be a good hitter, and one of the things he stressed was concentration. He said, "You're dancing with that pitcher out there. Get in rhythm with him; get in timing. Every move he makes, follow that move just like you're dancing with him, and you'll be a great hitter." And he used these words, "Ninety percent of hitting is in your head."

So I got thinking, "If ninety is in your head, I've got to do something to break your concentration."

My motive was not to let you get in rhythm with me, to break your concentration. Get you thinking that, "Hey! That pitcher is out of his mind out there." Or, "What's he doing?" or, "This guy's crazy!" They're mad at me, or they're laughing at me, but they're not thinking about their hitting.

Then, there's another fantastic thing that I discovered by accident. Being an old ballplayer yourself, you will know what the pepper league is, how a batter stands there with two or three fielders, and in practice you will have that little pepper game. We were playing a pepper game in Sacramento when I was with the Solons, and here's big husky ballplayers there, fielding this pepper game, and the batter hits one over our head. The bat boy, a little kid in back of us, picks up the ball, and he's standing ten feet from us, and he goes to throw it to us, and you know how awkward little kids are in their delivery, and here are these big, husky ballplayers, they don't know when he's going to throw, because of his awkward motion, and I'm thinking, "Hey, look at us. We're shaken up by this kid's awkward motion."



*It's upsetting your timing, then.*

Right. So, I think, "Hey, why not use this?" So I used awkward motions. I'd windup with both hands over both shoulders. I'd bat the glove down here a half a dozen times. And here's another one—and how I got away with this, I don't know—but I'd even put talcum powder in the glove and punch holes in the fingers, and I'd pat that together. Lay down the smoke screen. [laughter] And I got away with it. But I did everything I could think of to break your concentration. And frequently other managers—like Bucky Harris and Oscar Vitt—they'd tried to get a balk called on me for some of these motions that I had. So I knew I was not only bothering the manager . . . and some catchers, they didn't want to catch me. A lot of my catchers in the Coast League—they didn't want to catch me. They just got too nervous waiting for the pitch, see. [laughter] And one of the catchers, Marcucci, though, said to the manager, "If it's bothering a catcher that much, imagine what it's doing to the batter, see."

I definitely could break their concentration. I remember one time in a game against Los Angeles in Wrigley Field, I took a nail out of my pocket with a little red ribbon on it and walked about halfway down to the mound and stuck it in the ground out there and walked from home plate out to that nail, and all the time the batter is waiting. Now, note that I couldn't get away with it today, because you got twenty seconds to get it up there. [laughter] But I'd stuck it in the ground and walked in a curve back to the plate, and the batter is saying, "Hey, he's going to try to throw a curve over that nail." [laughter] But note, he's thinking about something besides hitting.

This is a good one: Frankie Hawkins was playing. Now, you wouldn't get away with this today, either, because the umpire would call time. But Frankie Hawkins comes to the plate, playing for Oakland. And we'd just read in the paper that morning where his wife divorced him. So when he comes to the plate, the catcher

says to him, “Hey, Frankie! Who’s doing the dishes at your place now?” And I knew this, because I’d kept a book on all these. I knew he was temperamental, that if you throw at him, which we did, he’s apt to charge the mound. [laughter] So we knew he was very temperamental when my catcher said, “Frankie, who’s doing the dishes at your place now?” Frankie turns around and starts talking to the catcher. Three times while he’s talking to the catcher, I pitched. Strike one, strike two. He hasn’t even seen the pitch yet, and they call him out. [laughter]

So, then I had players that I played against in the Coast League that later became teammates. We’d buy them, you know. And they’d tell me that, “You didn’t have the greatest curve in the world, you didn’t have the fastest ball, but we hated to bat against you. We’d get nervous, or you’d make us wait so long.”

Oh, another trick I learned in this league, too, that I’d wait and wait, and if the batter just takes a bat and stands there, the strength goes out of your arms, see. So I’d make you wait. [laughter] Or you’d take a swing to make that circulation. The minute you took your swing I’d throw the fast ball without a windup or anything, see. [laughter] So that’s the reason I went through all these crazy windups. My original thought was to break your concentration, not let you get in rhythm with me. But the fans began to go bananas over this—they loved it. And this was drawing fans in. So, now I’m doing it for two reasons, to entertain, and also to break the concentration. [laughter] And frequently in Sacramento, if we got seven or eight runs behind, and people start to go home in the seventh inning, they’d bring me in from the bullpen to put on my act, see. [laughter] So they’d then stay there and buy beer and hotdogs. So I’m parlaying this crazy windup now into additional years in the Coast League and in the Willy Loop.

*So you got this idea, maybe, when you were at the university, or maybe in 1935?*

I got the idea of breaking your concentration. I used it in football, even. By the way, at the same time I was taking a lot of courses in psychology at the university, and I used psychology all through my pitching. I did a lot of things psychologically, to break your concentration, to break your rhythm, to get you thinking about something else. And I used it against Casey Stengel. It didn't work too well against O'Doul, because he knew what I was doing. [laughter] And he'd tell his players, and players that had played for him that later were teammates of mine, they'd say that he'd tell them in the dugout, "Forget about what he's doing out there. Just think about, sooner or later, he has to pitch. So just wait till he pitches." See?

*Well, O'Doul was a very smart baseball man, especially in hitting, don't you think?*

I consider him one of the greatest. Casey Stengel, I loved the guy and enjoyed him, and he would mimic me and try to get me in a conversation, always good-naturedly. So was O'Doul. Some of the other managers were not so, though. But O'Doul was always a gentleman, as was Casey. But O'Doul was by far the smarter of the two. Casey was a loveable guy, but, actually, you're not going to learn too much baseball from Casey.

*But O'Doul, you could?*

Right.

*And O'Doul was a good hitting instructor.*

Right. Absolutely. One of the best. As a matter of a fact, I credit [him for] Joe Dimaggio—Lefty O'Doul made him. Because I'd played against him in that winter league down there, and Joe was good. He could run, he could throw, and he was a

fair hitter. But when O'Doul got him, made a fantastic hitter out of him. Took an ordinary hitter and made a great hitter out of him. And O'Doul was great for that. I have a great and healthy respect for O'Doul.

*But with your baseball psychology, when you first started out, you had less moves, or less distractions.*

Right. When I was playing for Threlkel I had a few.

*A few, and you built on them over the years.*

Right. I had this idea of waiting for you to take that swing, and frequently, with a man on first, it worked beautifully. Keep watching the guy on first, but I'm watching the batter out of the corner of my eye, and the minute he took that free swing forward I let go of my pitch, and always a fast ball, and always a strike. See, to be sure it's a strike, because nine times out of ten, he'd never get the bat around. [laughter] So I'd want to be sure it was a strike.

*We should mention that you're a left-handed pitcher, of course. If everybody doesn't know.*

Right. That's how I developed that. And I used it a lot, psychologically.

*Were you a fairly fast pitcher? Did you have a pretty good fast ball?*

Now, I'm glad you raised the question, because when I was pitching for Threlkel I had a ninety-mile-an-hour fast ball. Jake Lawlor would tell you that. The night game that I pitched against the League All-Stars, I know I was throwing in the nineties that night, because when they had those old-fashioned catcher's gloves,

you know, boy, I tell you, it was popping. I could hear it pop. And when Jake came in his hand was red, and Jake told me that night . . . and Jake, normally, is not too complimentary. He's cussing you out instead of complimenting. But Jake told me that that was the fastest pitching he'd ever caught.

When I went into the Coast League I had a sneaky fast ball. It was faster than it looked. So there's something about that, that when I went out of the Coast League, it was gone. I didn't have the fast ball. I went in with a fairly good curve ball. When I came out, a very ordinary curve ball. So, as I began to lose the fast ball, and as I began to lose my stuff, I had to do something else. And I did it with control and with an exaggerated study of batters. I knew their foul, every player in the league. I had a book on them. I watched all of them in batting practice. When I got out there early, and when they're taking batting practice, I'm in the stands, or in our dugout, and I'm making notes on everything they did. I had a very unusual knowledge of the batters, of every batter in the league. And I used that to be sure I'd keep the ball out of your strength, out of your power. Incidentally, that probably wouldn't work today, because of the pitching machines and batting cages. If a batter has a weakness, let's say, the low-and-away pitch, he'll set that machine, and he'll practice by hours for that low-and-away pitch. [laughter] So it's amazing today, when you watch TV, how they'll hit that bad pitch out of the park.

Today I wouldn't get away with a lot of this stuff that I got away with. By the way, braggadociously, I'd like to mention that there's a rule in the rule book today that they put in just to stop me, in pro ball. [laughter] And that rule is: today you're limited on the number of pumps. Two pumps, and that's it.

*So you oftentimes would pump three, four, five times.*

Oh, I'd pump five, six. Matter of fact, Hollywood complained that, hey, I'm just wasting time out there. So the president of the

league came to the next game and put the stop watch on me, and the next day in the paper he said, "I timed every pitch, and he'd go to nineteen seconds, but he'd never go to twenty. So he's within the limit." And I did have a phenomenal count. I knew when the twenty seconds was up, but frequently I went the entire nineteen.

*So sometimes you'd pump three times, and sometimes once?*

And sometimes not at all. See, sometimes I'd just throw with no windup or anything. [laughter] The next time I'd give you a nineteen-second windup. I'd even come clear down to the ground and cross my arms here. And even though I was left handed, I would windup right handed, and throw left and windup left handed and back over to the right or back to the left. I'd changed the ball back and forth, even, in the windup. [laughter] And sometimes, you'd get a couple of fast balls to look at, and then I'd come clear down to my shoes with the windup and throw underhanded to you. [laughter] So you're not going to get the same pitch twice.

I'd go through some motion, and according to the rule book, any motion that is designed to deceive the batter, could be a balk. And the umpires used to say to the manager over there, "Hey! He never winds-up the same way twice. How can you call it differently?" See?

*Did any umpires ever call a balk on you?*

Only once in my entire Coast League career was I called for a balk. We were playing San Francisco at the time, and I went to pick the guy off of third, and O'Doul claimed I balked. The umpires said I didn't. But O'Doul protested it and took it to the League for arbitration. They forced us to play that last inning of the game over in San Francisco the next time we played. We came out and had to play one inning with the same pitcher, the same line-up.

*Same guy on third base?*

The same situation. And we lost it, we lost the game. But that's the only time I was ever called for a balk.

*Do you notice any difference in the strike zone?*

I'm glad you brought that up, too, because I think that's worthy of mentioning. Back when I first started in semi-pro ball, in high school ball, and coaching, the strike-zone was knees to shoulders. Then it got from letters to knees. And then it came from belt to knees, and the strike zone now pretty much in college and in pro ball is belt to knees. I have a strong feeling that the rules today are prejudiced against the pitcher, because they are limiting his movements, they are limiting his wind-up, they've taken the strike zone away from him. And the strike zone today is entirely different than it was in Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig's time. I can remember, particularly, in semi-pro and college ball, that you always got that strike zone through the letters, anyway. You got that all the time. Today, not so. Today, they've got that thing down pretty much belt to knees.

*Which really is a tremendous advantage to the hitter.*

Oh, definitely. Another thing that I think has really hurt the pitchers today is that batting cage and that pitching machine. See, a batter today can correct his weakness easily. Let's say his weakness is the curve ball. They could set that pitching machine to throw curves. And hey, if you stand up there a thousand times against a curve ball, they're going to make a good curve-ball hitter out of you. They do study hitters today much more. This bothers me, too. College games in particular, the catcher's got his head in the dugout on every pitch. All the calls are coming out of the dugout. I don't see how a catcher can ever learn to catch if all the

decisions are made in there. Another thing, as you know, having played the game, that today maybe you've got a good curve ball, but today the thing just isn't working for some unknown reason. Maybe it's the wind, but today your curve ball isn't your best pitch. Yet, the dugout's telling you, "Throw the curve ball." And you know better than anyone else what you can do today and what you can't do. And jokingly I have said—as I did at the university game the other day—the catcher looks over, gets the pitch from the coach, gives the pitch to the pitcher. The pitcher throws a hit, a home run. If I had been the pitcher, I'd have walked over to the dugout and said, "Coach, you called the wrong pitch." [laughter] Because I'm not sure that's good.

*I don't know why they don't eliminate the middle man. Just let the coach give the pitcher the signal in the dugout.*

Right. [laughter]

*Well, what do you think about all this videotaping people? Batters are studying their swing and everything with a video tape. Has that made a big difference in baseball?*

Big difference. Ted Williams used to be criticized, because he had mirrors down in the basement of his home, and he'd stand there by the hour and swing and watch the mirrors, and he had a lot of tapes made of his hitting. The sports media interpreted this: "Hey, he likes to see himself in the mirror. He's a cocky, self-conceited guy." But he was a student of hitting, and he made this a study of hitting, and, man, this guy was great. With all that, though, I could never figure out how come Ted Williams never hit to the opposite field. It would have doubled his hitting ability, because, as you know, they used that Williams shift, and they all went over there. But he was so good, he could still hit those line shots by them. [laughter]



But today the favor is with the batter; the pitcher is handicapped in so many ways today. And true, back in those old days we cheated a lot. Something else I think we should kick around that's worthy of history is, back in your day and my day, we threw at the batters a lot, particularly, when the batter came up there and really dug in and got himself all set. We threw at him. And the intent wasn't to hit them, or to hurt them, but, again, to break their concentration. If you're thinking about getting hit in the head, you're not thinking about hitting—you're hanging loose. [laughter] So they threw at the batters a lot. And as you'd probably know, too, having played the game, if you got a home run, the next time up you could expect to be knocked down. [laughter]

*And if you weren't knocked down, the pitcher caught hell from the manager.*

Right. I've been fined for not throwing at the hitter, particularly, if the hitter was a former teammate of mine or friend of mine. Matter of fact, this guy we talked about once before, Dick Bartell, gave the order to knock the guy down, and I went to the plate under the pretense of getting the ball from the umpire, and I warned the batter, "Hey, John! Hang loose," and turned around, and went back. So he knew I was going to throw at him, but the catcher told Bartell, and I got fined for warning him that I'm going to throw at him. Back in those days, the batter knew you were going to throw at him half the time.

*Was Bartell managing the team in the Coast League?*

Yes, he was managing Sacramento. Now never have I thrown at a batter with the intent of actually hitting him. But I do want to shake him up. I do want him to hang loose. I do want him to think, "Hey! I better think about getting hit, rather than hitting."

See? So I'd throw at them just to get them out of there. If they'd crowd the plate, I'd throw at them. And another little psychological trick I would pull, as batters do today, they will walk out of the box. Back in our day, if I'm in my motion and you walk out, you're gambling. If it's a strike, it's a strike. Today, if they walk out, even if I'm in my motion, the umpire calls time immediately.

*Calls time right away.*

Well, if you walked out on me, I'd wait till you got back in there, then I'd walk out and pick up the resin bag or fool around. I'd have this happen, particularly against Oakland, with Brooks Holder and Dario Lodigiani and some of those guys—they'd walk out. I'd walk out. They'd walk out. I'd walk out. [laughter] Until finally the umpires would call time and say, "Come on you guys! Let's just play ball." [laughter] So there you were.

*And even in those days with all that, you still had fast games. You still had games under two hours.*

Yes. Right.

*Now, they go three hours.*

Then you probably remember, too, that we had a time, in order to speed up the game, that you'd just motion towards first, and they'd send the batter to first. When you're walking him intentionally, you didn't make the four pitches. You know, if you pointed to first, they'd put him on, to speed up the game. And incidentally that's one reason they stopped me, under the pretense they wanted to speed up the game, and I'm slowing it down. [laughter]

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ELEVEN OLD MEN

*Let's go back to Reno for a few minutes here. This is off the topic of baseball, but there was a football team called the Eleven Old Men?*

Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. We have to talk about the Eleven Old Men. Very little has been published about the Eleven Old Men, but the Eleven Old Men originated in the late 1930s—1936, 1937, 1938, 1939. And I don't know whose idea it was. Ty Cobb, the sportswriter, was a big promoter of this, and he wrote it up big in the papers, and Ty Cobb traveled with the team, but somebody got the idea that football's all over when you finish college. Why can't we get together and still play somebody? So out of former college players and some high school players that had graduated from high school, we formed the Eleven Old Men. We had a team; Sacramento had a team; San Francisco had a team.

*Were the other teams called Eleven Old Men, too?*

No! They weren't. We were the only ones. Quite a few Saint Mary's guys played in this, incidentally, former Saint Mary's play-

ers. And all of this started out before pro football was coming in, so there's no place for the former college player to play. So we got together a group here, and other towns did the same thing. We played some of the service teams. The navy brought up a team. We'd play on the old Reno High School field over on Ninth Street. We borrowed the high school uniforms and got together the Eleven Old Men. [laughter] Then we had a sportswriter by the name of Bill Nash, who had lettered at Illinois, I think. Illinois or Penn State.

*Maybe Pennsylvania, Penn or Penn State.*

Yes, Penn State, I think. He was a sportswriter, and he joined us. And one reason I remember him is because he was a sportswriter who was sort of anti. He wrote against the university, wrote against the teams around here. So a lot of them didn't like him, and when he came out they challenged him. "Hey! If you're so good and you know so much about this game," and he wore his letter sweater, "come out and play." He came out and lived up to the reputation. Matter of fact, I was playing quarterback in this one game—I don't remember who we were playing—but I threw and completed a fifty yard pass to him for a touchdown. So, hey, this guy lived up to his reputation, see. [laughter] But he played with us all the time.

*Did he play end, then?*

He was an end. But Alf Sorensen played with us. Al Lansdon played with us. Lee DeLauer played with us. Marcinko. A lot of ex-high school players played with us, and Sunday games primarily, on the old high-school field. This team even went to Montana, played as far away as Montana. And the head cheerleader at the university was Elsie and her famous knees. And Elsie was our cheerleader. She'd travel with us, too. So we had a cheerleading section.

*So, you actually, of course, had more than eleven men on the team?*

Right. Right. But also, about this time wasn't Roosevelt trying to increase the Supreme Court?

Yes.

I think that's how they developed that name.

*The Eleven Old Men, did they play all during World War II, then, and up until the 1950s?*

Oh, yes.

*How long did it last?*

That team was in existence for probably ten years, and, of course, the rules were a lot different then, too. You wouldn't get away with this today, but we were playing Sacramento, and Sacramento was loaded with former Saint Mary's players, and they were tough. So we're playing Sacramento, and we're one point ahead, I think—seven to six, or something like that—and a couple of minutes left. Sacramento has the ball, though, and I call time-out, call the guys together, and I said, "Be offside on every play."

"We'll get penalized!"

And I said, "Don't matter. They can't penalize us across the goal line if we get clear down there, which will be only half the distance to the goal, and we'll burn up the two minutes or whatever we have left."

So, "All right."

We went in. We were offside. They penalized us. We were offside again. The third time our end, Joe Cleary, was so far offside that he got the ball from center. [laughter] He was clear in the backfield, and he got the ball from center. Of course, they penal-

ized us, probably, from the twenty-yard line here clear down to the other twenty, and then the gun went off, and the game was over, but, of course, in those days there weren't all those timeouts. So we saved the game that way.

The last game that I played with them was a Thanksgiving Day game in Ely, and we were going out to Ely to play with the agreement that after they pay expenses, we got half the gate. And we figured Thanksgiving—nothing else going on in Ely—that, man, we'll get at least a thousand people, and we should make fifty bucks apiece out of this game. And Louis Spitz, who was later with the police department, was one of our players, too. So out we go to Ely, and we go out the night before the game, and we're in the restaurant eating, and in comes six guys with their letters from the University of Nevada. They'd just finished the season. "Hey, you guys! What are you doing here?"

"We got a game."

"You must be mistaken. We have the game tomorrow."

What Ely did is out of the gate receipts that they're going to get, they bring these six guys that had just finished the season at the university. [laughter] We'd all been out of college eight, ten years. So we really got beat. I was the quarterback. I got sacked eleven times. [laughter] Ended up with a broken hand, a dislocated shoulder, and black and blue all over. I got sacked eleven times in that game, because here the university . . . [laughter]

*Kids are ten years younger than you, at least.*

And got all of their expenses. They got more money than we got out of it. [laughter] And Quilici, who passed away several years ago, but the family is still here, was playing with us, and in college he was a rough, tough player.

*Was that Hugo Quilici?*

Yes. Well, we called him Bull Quilici, and he was the fullback, and a good one, but we didn't get any of the gate receipts at all, because they'd hired these guys from the university to come. [laughter]

*They didn't have any money left?*

And, by the way, it was eight degrees below zero, and half the field was covered with ice, and if you could get off the ice on to the turf . . . . [laughter]

*You were doing a lot of slipping and sliding?*

Right. [laughter] But if you ran from the turf onto the ice, then you were dead the minute you hit the ice.

But anyway, we lost the game, and now we have to eat that night and eat breakfast the next morning, and everybody's broke. So I wrote the checks to get the team back to Reno. [laughter] And, oh, just before he passed away, Quilici, laughingly, because I'd had to finance all of them, he sent me a five-dollar bill, which I have, and they took up a collection. We had a reunion banquet for quite awhile after the Eleven Old Men. We'd get together and lie to each other, like baseball banquets. And they'd take up a collection—Ty Cobb passed the plate—to reimburse me for what the Ely trip cost me, and I think I got a dollar sixty-nine cents back at this dinner. [laughter]

*They really all chipped in.*

Oh, yes.

*Did you have a coach then? Ty Cobb was your coach, or he was your manager?*

No, Ty was our manager. And everybody coached. I coached part of it myself, the same time I was coaching Reno High. And all of our equipment came from Reno High. [laughter]

*Because you were coaching?*

The pads and the helmets and everything.

*Well, how many guys were on the team, actually, on the traveling squad? About fifteen or twenty?*

About twenty or so, yes. And that changed from time to time. There must have been a hundred guys that played on that Eleven Old Men team over a period of ten years, and Ty always saw that we got heavy publicity. He took care of that.



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## THE COAST LEAGUE

*We know you signed professionally with the Sacramento team. What year would you have first played pro ball?*

Nineteen forty-four was my first year.

*How did you get contacted? Who contacted you?*

A former Saint Mary's player by the name of Bell. He had played baseball for Saint Mary's, and he was doing the score keeping for Jack Threlkel. He kept track of me when I was playing for Threlkel and when I was playing for the Larks, and he was a good friend of Earl Sheely's, having played for Sheely at Saint Mary's. So he got Sheely up here to take a look at me, and Sheely came up and saw me pitch game one game and invited me down.

*For a try-out?*

Yes, for a try-out. So I went down for a try-out, and they signed me, but I told them, "I have to go back to school." I'm

surprised that they kept me under those conditions, but they kept me, and when school was out I reported. I was with them the day they opened the season, but then I left them and came back to school. Then, when school was out I went down and reported and had just an average year, and I'll long remember the first game that I went in. We were losing, and I went in with one out and the bases loaded. I came in from the bull pen, and about the sixth inning, I think, Sheely came out and he knew that I'd be a little nervous my first game and so forth. So he said, "Now look at it as just a country ball game. That batter up there is just another uniform, just another face." And my catcher, who was Ben Steiner, had just come down from the Boston Red Sox. And Steiner was bitter, because he came down from the majors, and now he has to play with this bunch of Coast League ballplayers. He was disgruntled, anyway, dissatisfied, and a mean, tough guy. Sheely had just said, "Now, that batter is just another uniform, just another face."

When Sheely turned to walk away, Steiner said, "Yes, that's Frenchy Uhalt. He led the Coast League two years ago in hitting, and you'd better watch out what you throw, or he'll hit it out of the park." Now that's great encouragement from my catcher, see.

But Sheely told me, "Make them hit the ball on the ground." Double play, bases loaded, be sure they hit the ball on the ground. Well, I knew enough about pitching to keep the pitch low, and I'll probably get out of this. So, I wasn't as nervous as Sheely thought I was, but, hey, first chance here, and I didn't know the batters the way I would another year or two. But I know I have to make this guy hit the ball on the ground. So, I throw a low pitch, and, sure enough, it comes off the bat, and it's on the ground, and it's going toward the third base and the shortstop. We're going to get a double play and get out of the inning on one pitch. I look around. The ball is dead center between the third baseman and the shortstop for a single. [laughter] So they score a run. They score a run, and it didn't work. The next guy, though, the

bases are still loaded. I've got to make him hit the ball on the ground. And, sure enough, again, I throw the pitch I want. They hit the ball on the ground. It's going toward first. We're going to get a double play, and we're out of the inning with only one run scored. The ball is dead center between first and second, another safe hit. [laughter] And Sheely comes out to get me. That was all.

*They only gave you two batters?*

Yes. And he came out to get me, but he wasn't burnt up. He didn't say anything. And I'm out of there. Hey, here's my big chance, and I've blown it. They scored two runs off of me, and I'm out of there. And I think, "Hey. I'll probably be released. I had my shot."

If Sheely had just said to me in the locker room, "Hey. You did everything right, it just didn't turn out that way," I'd have been all right." But I think he's unhappy with me. My teammates are probably unhappy with me. And I came back to Reno after the game, and I'm even debating whether to go back or not. No one has said anything one way or the other, but I went back, and I'm not even called to the bullpen now for at least two weeks. I'm not even down in the bullpen, and I think, "Hey, I've had it. I've blown it. The end of the season I'll probably be released." We're playing San Diego. The bases are loaded again, and I think this time we're one run ahead, identically the same situation. Three of us are in the bullpen now, and he waves me in. And I come in. I know I have to make them hit the ball on the ground. Same situation. I get out with a double play, and we're out of the inning. From then on I'm in.

And then he tells me, "Hey! I knew you lost your confidence. I knew what you were thinking." Then he said, "I had to wait till I got you in the same situation."

And I thought, "How nice. But why didn't you mention it at first?"

But I love Sheely. He was like a dad to me, just a great guy, although, I didn't learn too much from him. Herm Pillette, by the way, was our pitching coach, and Herm was a nice guy, but I actually didn't learn too much about pitching that first year in the Coast League. Everything I picked up I'd either brought with me or learned from game experience, you know. But from then on, I got my regular turn in the bullpen, but I was never a starter that first year. My second year I was a starter, and from then on I was a starter and a reliever.

*When school was going on, how did you work your pitching?*

Before I reported every year, I would go to spring training with them, though, and practice during spring training.

*You'd get a week or so off from school?*

Right. Easter vacation. I always worked with them Easter vacation. Then I'd come back to school. When school was out I'd join them and play until school started. Then I'd leave them. Now, that was very unusual.

*But, say, during April and May, did you pitch one or two games a week?*

I'd practice here, and in April I'd practice down in the old gym at Reno High, and Lino Del Grande, who's still around now, would catch for me. I would practice indoors during the bad weather, and outdoors I'd practice, but not with Threlkel or any of the ball clubs. But all the time I'm coaching baseball, so I'm practicing and working out with my own team. That got me in trouble one time, because I was used to having my high school catchers throw to second base, and you'd step to one side, and they'd rainbow it to second. The first time that I pitched in the

Coast League, and the catcher threw to second, and I didn't know he was throwing to second, because the ball is coming right at me. [laughter] So I stick out my glove and catch it, and he comes charging the mound. [laughter] "Hey, I had the guy thrown out. What are you doing?" [laughter] But I did practice. Got in a lot of practice with my own high school team, and I'd pitch against them in practice.

*But did you pitch any games for Sacramento, like on Wednesday or Sunday?*

No. Not at first. Later on, I did, but at first I'd just go down when school was out. Then the last years I'd go down before and go down after I got back here. And even one year when we were in the playoffs, they flew me down for just one game and back. So I worked it out that way.

*Did you have regular days, or regular nights, that you pitched when school was going on? Like did you go down on a Wednesday or a Sunday?*

The last part of my playing in the Coast League, when I was still with Sacramento, yes, I had a regular schedule. My schedule was Wednesdays. I'd pitch Wednesday night and then go down and pitch on Sundays while I was going to school. Frequently, though, when I was out of school for the summer I'd pitch three games a week, but once school started, it would be on Wednesday, Wednesday night, or a Sunday double header. I'd always pitch one of those double headers on Sunday, and I looked forward to that. At that time I was drawing a good crowd. They always had a better crowd on the nights I pitched and the games that I pitched. So I was beginning to attract a crowd over and above the norm. And they'd have their biggest crowd on those days.

*Did a lot of people from Reno come down?*

Yes, they did. I was going to mention that. Frequently they would get a phone call from Reno asking when I was pitching. They'd ask, "Will he be pitching Sunday?" And then, on Sunday they'd run a bus down, or quite a contingent of fans would come down from Reno. And Frank Menante and Doc Hund and J.P. Morgan and quite a few high school teachers would come down for the games on Sundays. I always worried about those games, because, note, they're seeing you just once. They're reading about you, and if you have a bad game, "Hey! How come we read about this guy, and we saw him, and we didn't think he was that hot." And that always worried me.

But I was very fortunate, every time the Reno crowd came down, except once, I think I lost one game in extra innings, and Threlkel was there. Threlkel comes in the clubhouse, and I lost it on an error, by the way, and the guy that made the error's locker is right next to me, and Threlkel comes in, "You should have won, but that donkey kicked the ball!" [laughter] And the guy is sitting right next to me—very embarrassing. But two or three times I beat San Diego. I beat Oakland. Beat Portland. One game, in particular, that I really enjoyed, a good part of the faculty came down from Reno. My principal was there, and I was just hoping I'd have a good day that day, and I beat Portland five to one that day. And the one was an error, so there were no earned runs. I had an exceptionally good game. This really impressed my faculty and my principal, because, by now, I've got a fan club of little kids, and when I went out in the bullpen to warm up, here all the kids ran down to the bullpen. Incidentally, this presented a problem, because the kids would all come down and want an autograph, and, hey, you have ten, fifteen minutes to warm up to pitch a game. [laughter] If you sign one or two, there's a hundred that you didn't sign. But that impressed my principal that all these kids ran down to the bullpen when I went to warm up.

*Who was your principal then, do you remember?*

Roger Corbett was the principal. That really impressed him, what a fan club I had. I had a great fan club in Sacramento. They'd bring cakes and cookies and grapes and whatever. Sacramento was really good to me, really good. I got a lot of favorable publicity, made a lot of friends. The only bad year that I had at Sacramento was the year under Dick Bartell. We didn't get along, at all. And, of course, I think as we talked before that in batting practice I threw the grapefruit, painted white. I threw the grapefruit to him in batting practice, and the juice went all over him, and that didn't set too well. Then he'd order me to hit batters, and I wouldn't do it, or I'd go in and warn them. Another time, a former teammate of mine had just been sold to Seattle, and now we're playing Seattle. He was sold to them just two days before. And he comes to bat against me, and we are ahead five or six runs. So this was his first game with Seattle.

*What was his name? Do you remember?*

King. Art King was his name. And I want to make him look good, since he's getting his chance. I throw it right down the heart, but I think, "Hey, he'll hit a long fly ball out there. We'll catch it. What's the difference? But don't strike him out. Make him look good." So I throw it right down the line—he hits it out of the park. [laughter] Bartell knew that, too. And then, to make matters worse, when he rounds third base, is coming to home, I congratulate him. [laughter] Bartell was a blood-and-guts player. Boy, he didn't want any fraternization like that. So, boy, this upset him. Everything I did upset him, but the straw that broke the camel's back . . . . I don't know whether we talked about Novikoff?

*No, we didn't.*

Well, Lou Novikoff was a great hitter down from the Chicago Cubs and playing in the Coast League and hitting home runs against everybody. And this is burning Bartell up. He's beat us two games already with home runs. So Bartell gets all the pitchers in the clubhouse before the game, and he tells them, "Now, I've pleaded with you. I've asked you. I've told you how to pitch him, and you pay no attention to me. Anybody that throws a pitch above his belt—it's going to cost you a hundred dollars. And that's it. *No pitch* above his belt." All right. We go out to play the game now. Guy Fletcher starts, and I'm in the bullpen along with two or three other guys. Novikoff, first time up, Fletcher gets a pitch a little high, and Novikoff hits it out of the park. Bartell comes charging the mound. Fletcher's out of there, cost him a hundred bucks. Beasley comes in from the bullpen. And I get by for a couple of innings. Novikoff comes up again. Bartell gets up from his seat, and he's on the steps of the dugout already and motions, "Down, down, down, keep the ball down." So all right. I wind up and roll it on the ground all the way to the plate. [laughing] Bartell comes charging out of the dug-out, "What the hell you doing?" The crowd is laughing. They are cracking up, see. [laughter] And Novikoff is laughing. The umpires are laughing. Everybody's laughing but Bartell, and he comes out, "What the hell you doing?"

And I said, "Protecting my hundred dollars." [laughter]

The next day I'm sold to Seattle. So that's how I got to Seattle. [laughter] I learned later that Bartell, a month before, was trying desperately to sell me, but the stockholders and the business manager didn't want to sell me, because I'm drawing the crowds, see. But Bartell doesn't care about the crowd or the money. "Get rid of this guy." [laughter]

*It's a wonder that they let him sell you.*

Well, as I understand it, he said, "It's either Beasley or me."



*Naturally, it had to be.*

Yes. So, hey. But that was his last year. At the end of the year they fired him, also. And this, I think, is worthy of mentioning, because along with me he sold three other players: Ramsey, Mann, Beasley, and Fletcher. That year that was the biggest trade in pro ball. Four guys being sold or traded to Seattle, for four of their players. The four players that they got from Seattle—one was jailed and didn't finish the season, and two quit on Bartell. [laughter] They quit and went home. And the very next week, Bartell and the Solons came up to play Seattle. All four of the guys that he had sold or traded—all four beat him. Three of us were pitchers. All three of us won our game against him. And Ramsey beat him with the bat. They all beat him. [laughter] So, the guys that he traded all beat him in his next series against Seattle. And, boy, did we pour it on him, too. [laughter]

*When you were at Sacramento, was there a fellow named John Pintar, a pitcher from Ely, Nevada, on the team at that time?*

Yes. I know John well. As a matter of fact, John finished his schooling. He left Ely and came in to Reno. I had him as a student at Reno High, and then he graduated from Reno High and went to the Solons and became a very successful pitcher with the Solons. He was there when Pepper Martin was there. And Pepper Martin's last year there, they won the league. To win the league they had to beat Los Angeles in three games. They were battling with Los Angeles for the league leadership, but Los Angeles was two games ahead of them, I think. They beat Los Angeles all three games and won the pennant, and that was when Pepper Martin was managing. But John Pintar was one of the winning pitchers in that series, and he did very well in the Coast League. He was highly successful with Sacramento.

*Did he ever go to the major leagues?*

No, he didn't. He is still in Sacramento, still alive. And now he is an outstanding golfer in Sacramento. I would say that if you picked the ten best golfers in Sacramento today, John would be one of the ten.

*When you played in the Coast League, what was the average salary of a ballplayer?*

The average salary at that time, I would say, was around five or six hundred dollars.

*A month?*

Right. Which in those days that wasn't too bad. It would go as high as fifteen hundred, two thousand. Eddie Fitzgerald, our catcher, Bill Ramsey—they were getting that at the time. Clem Dreisewerd, Jerry Staley—though, when he went to the St. Louis Cardinals, was only getting, I think, five, six hundred. And meal money, we might mention that. Meal money was around five dollars then. And that's up around fifteen and twenty now, twenty-five.

*So, you got five dollars a day to eat on, just when you're on the road.*

Yes, when we're on the road. We did get a break, though. They, as a rule, housed us in low-cost housing. Some of us lived in homes, or three or four of us would rent a house, and we'd get a break on that, or if we stayed in the hotel, the hotel would give us a break. When I first went into the Coast League we'd travel by train.

*Let me interrupt you for a minute. Maybe we should say what teams were in the Coast League and what the classification was in the proximity to the major leagues?*

Right. Good question, let's kick that one around. We were Triple-A, and Triple-A was the next step below the majors. And they didn't have the expansion then that they have in the majors now. Had they had the expansion then, every team in the Coast League would have been in the majors. All of them would have been. But in our league then, down south we had San Diego, Hollywood, and Los Angeles. In the Bay area we had the San Francisco Seals and the Oakland Oaks, and we had Sacramento there, of course, in that area. Up north, Seattle and Portland. And that was it. That was the Coast League at the time. Prior to that, though, Denver for several years was in the Coast League. But when I was playing, all the time in the Coast League, there was San Diego, Hollywood, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento. And in the north, the Portland Beavers and the Seattle Rainiers. And that was the Coast League. As a rule, we'd travel and play five-to-seven-game series every place we went—five to seven games—and then move on to the next one. At first, the travel was by train. Then, the last years, travel was by plane. Everything by plane.

*So in the Coast League you were just a step away from the major leagues?*

Yes, right. A lot of our players went to the majors. And a lot of major league ballplayers came down to us. I would say that three-quarters of the Coast League players were down from the majors. And some still should have been there, like Steve Mesner. Cincinnati had three third basemen. And when we bought Mesner

from Cincinnati, we could have had any one of the three. They said, "We have three third basemen. Take your pick." And Herm Pillette and Sheely were back there, and they picked Mesner, because he had the fewest strike outs of any of the third basemen. He wasn't a particularly good fielder, but we could have had any one of the three. So, note, any one of the three is coming down to the Coast League, even though they're major league ballplayers. And a strange one, Mickey Grasso, was a favorite of mine and one of my catchers, although he hated to catch me, because he had to wait too long for the pitch. [laughter] But Mickey Grasso was a catcher for the Giants when they were back East, and he was in a love affair with the owner's daughter, and the mother and owner didn't want their daughter marrying Mickey Grasso, and they got him as far out of New York as they could get him. [laughter] He's the first-string catcher, and they sent him to Sacramento to get rid of him. [laughter] But, there again, he was a major league ball player. And, of course, we had Marvin Owen down from the Detroit Tigers that had played in the World Series. He got a better salary at Portland than he got for Detroit, because he was the manager and player. But we had Luke Easter down from the majors, and Dario Lodigiani, and Frenchy Uhalt, and Brooks Holder.

*Lou Novikoff?*

Lou Novikoff, and Bill "The Clown" Schuster. They were all up in the majors at one time. And the Sacramento ball club, we were loaded with ex-major-league ballplayers, and most of them disgruntled. They are down now, and it's tough for them to take, that they're coming down.

*The conditions weren't quite as good, either.*

Oh. Conditions—quite a bit of difference, right. I'll just throw this in. Vancouver was the richest ball club in the Willy Loop. I



*"Mickey Grasso was a catcher for the Giants when they were back East . . . "* Bud Beasley with Mickey Grasso, Seattle Rainiers, 1950.

found playing for Vancouver, our conditions and salary were as good as or better than in the Coast League.

*And in those days that was a class B league. And it later went to a class A league.*

Right. Weren't we class A, though, when I was playing in there?

*It was class B when you started, but it was class A when you ended.*

That's right. But all the ball parks were pretty good. San Diego was a little dark, and they had a short center-field fence.

And every now and then in San Diego an outfielder, going back for a fly in center field, would catch the ball and fall over the fence. [laughter] The nicest ball park was Los Angeles, Wrigley Field, but a brick wall. And one of our outfielders, Ramsey, broke his arm running into that brick wall.

*Did it have vines on it?*

Yes. Vines on it. And Seal Stadium was a good one, a big one. It was the biggest ball park. Oakland was very small, and the right-field fence was less than three hundred feet. [laughter] And pitchers hated to pitch in Oakland, but for some unknown reason I had exceptionally good luck in Oakland. In one week I beat Oakland three times, and it was the last week of the series. And Fletcher

had nineteen games in his contract. He'd asked for more money at the beginning of the season. He'd won twenty games the year before and wanted more money, and they said, "Well, how do you know you will have as good a year again?"

And he said—he was a very cocky guy—"Hey, I'll win twenty games against anybody."

So they said, "All right. If you win twenty games, we'll give you a five-thousand-dollar bonus." So, all right, that was the condition. We get to the last week in the series, and he has nineteen games. And Sheely, being a ball player's manager, versus the stockholders, was going to give Fletcher three chances at winning that twenty games. So he's going to pitch him Monday, Wednesday, and Sunday, I think, or Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday, to give him the chance to win the twenty games. The first game Fletcher is behind, and he's not winning, and it doesn't look like he's going to win. We are three or four runs behind. So Sheely figures, "I'll take him out and give him two more shots again. He's not going to win this one." So, they take Fletcher out and bring me in from the bullpen. Lo and behold, by the time we get to the ninth inning we're ahead, and I win the game. [laughter] The second game Fletcher gets thrown out! [laughter] He's ahead, and he gets thrown out of the game. Again, I come in from the bullpen. They catch up. I think we're one run ahead. They catch up. Then we finally go ahead to win it, and I get credit for my second win. The third game, Sunday, Fletcher gets thrown out again, and I come in from the bullpen and we win it. So I win three games in one week, and Fletcher loses all three and his bonus. [laughter]

*You played in the Coast League from 1944, when you signed with Sacramento, until 1950. Some of those years that you played in the Coast League, World War II was going on.*

Very true.

*Were there any travel restrictions? Did you have a hard time getting a train? Or did they play night games?*

We played both day and night games, but there was no problem with transportation. We started out traveling by train and ended up flying. Particularly, we were doing flying when I was playing with Seattle, but I think a good part of the time—in Sacramento—we were traveling by train, and we had a special car. The whole team occupied a special car. And compared to the travel today, it wasn't first cabin, but it was adequate.

*A lot of the trips were overnights, I guess, like from the Bay area to the Los Angeles area on an overnight.*

Oh, yes. In our traveling, as a rule, when we went south, we'd play San Diego and Hollywood. And maybe the next trip south we'd play Los Angeles. Up north it was Portland and Seattle. And in the Bay area it was Oakland, San Francisco.

*Did you take the train from Sacramento to the Bay area?*

Yes, most of the time it was by train.

*How long were the road trips? How long would you be out on the road?*

Oh, as I recall, we never had to spend overnight on the train, though. We always took the train south to Los Angeles, San Diego, and then we'd stay in a hotel there.

*What were some of the hotels you stayed in?*

I think in San Diego it was the Grant, and in Los Angeles it was the Rosalyn. I'll long remember that. It was sort of an old,

outdated hotel, but nice, and it was adequate. The only thing, it was located in sort of a cruddy part of town, and there was a bar about two blocks away from the hotel, and the music was so loud we could hear it all night long in the hotel. [laughter]

*Did you stay at a different hotel in Hollywood, then, or did you stay in the same?*

We stayed at the Hollywood Plaza in Hollywood, very nice hotel, and most of the accommodations in the hotel, they were good. We took our meals in the hotel, although, with meal money you could eat any place you wanted to, so we'd go out for Chinese dinners and things like that. As a rule, we'd go in groups. A group of five or six of your teammates would select a place to eat that night. And one funny story I recall was when Pepper Martin was managing the team, and when Pepper Martin was also managing, I think, San Diego a couple of years. And Pepper was a very religious guy—a rough, tough, rock-and-sock ballplayer, but a very religious guy. After a game, we were walking back to the hotel, and Pepper stopped us, because he heard a Salvation Army band playing about a block over. And if Pepper said, “Go to the Salvation Army,” you went or fought him. So we all went over, and he got the songbooks and passed them out, and we all had to stay and sing. [laughter] You either had a choice of staying and singing with Pepper, or fighting him, and, boy, he'd fight at the drop of a hat. [laughter] He had, “Praise the Lord,” and really carried on.

*Yes, you don't picture him as that type of person.*

No, you really don't. And I think another funny one—he tells this story on himself—was when he was playing with the St. Louis Cardinals. They were just getting ready to play for the World



Series, and the sportswriters asked a question of Pepper, "If you could have anything you wanted, what would you take?"

And they figured he'd say, "Championship of the World Series."

But he said, "I want to go to Heaven." And because they laughed at him for saying that, boy, he took off his coat and was ready to fight them. [laughter] He was very serious about it. And it just seemed so out of place, when this guy would fight at the drop of a hat, and yet, was so religious, on the other hand.

*I never heard that side of him.*

Yes. And it was very serious. He wasn't putting on an act. He was very serious about it.

*How many years did he manage at Sacramento when you were there?*

Actually, before I got there he was managing. I think it was 1942 that they won the pennant. They had to win the last three games, all three games against Los Angeles, in order to win the pennant. And he was deep into the music, too. He played the violin, and the story went around that if you wanted to make a team that Pepper Martin managed, you had to be able to play the accordion, or something, whether you could play baseball or not. He didn't want to break up this quartet. [laughter] So he was very musical along with it.

*Well, do you remember that group he had with the Saint Louis Cardinals? It was called the Mississippi Mud Cats.*

Yes. That was the Gas House Gang, also. They had a collection of musicians that played the kazoo and different things like that. [laughter] A great little character he was.

*Was he a playing manager when you were there?*

Yes. He was a playing manager. He managed the team from the north, when in those days at the end of the season you had an All-Star North Team and an All-Star South Team. They picked the cream of the crop from Portland and Seattle and San Francisco, Oakland, and Sacramento. And they played against San Diego, Hollywood, and Los Angeles in a North-South Pacific Coast League All-Star game.

*Just one game?*

One game. And I played in that game in 1945, I think it was, 1945 or 1946, because at that time I was leading the Coast League in pitching. So, I think Guy Fletcher, Red Mann, and myself were picked from Sacramento to play in that All-Star game. We played in the old Wrigley Field. A humorous incident that I'll never forget, and Red Adams will never forget: it had rained all day, but they'd cleared the field, and it was muddy, and the game went on, and it stopped raining, but the field was very muddy, and I was pitching, had a lot of mud in my cleats. Red Adams was at bat, and I went in to get a ball from the umpire, and while I was in there, I borrowed Red's bat to knock the mud out of my cleats, but in doing it, I broke his bat and just handed him back about one foot of it. And the crowd and the sports writers totally misinterpreted. They thought that I went in, got his bat, and broke it, just so he couldn't hit against me, see. [laughter] So they totally misinterpreted. And Red Adams, by the way, is scouting today. I don't know who he's scouting for, but I saw him up here this past summer, and he was telling that story to a couple of the other scouts when I walked up. [laughter] So we relived that incident.

*He has to be eighty-five years old.*

Oh, yes. At least, but he looked good. He looked in great shape.

*What position did Pepper Martin play?*

Second base a good part of the time, yes. And he was a good one.

*Was he a good manager, too?*

Very.

*Did he handle people well?*

Yes. He seemed to get along with the players very well.

*Good strategy?*

Yes. And his strategy . . . he knew baseball. Although, I don't think any manager knew baseball as well as Lefty O'Doul. He was really a scholar of the game, and a very good one. Bucky Harris was supposed to be a brain, also, although I'd never played for him, but did play against him.

*Who was he managing?*

He was managing Hollywood, I think, at the time. And Oscar Vitt also managed Hollywood for awhile. And then, I can't remember, maybe you can, the sportswriter at Hollywood, who later became the manager, a little short guy, and then later went from sportswriter to managing Hollywood to the major leagues. And he managed there. Do you happen to recall his name?

*In much later years there was a fellow named Jerry Coleman.*

No, it wasn't Coleman. I knew Coleman. But highly successful as a sportswriter and announcer. Imagine coming out of the announcing booth to manage Hollywood. And I think he was managing there in the late 1950s, because I visited Gene Handley, a former teammate of mine who was playing for Hollywood at the time, and I went in the clubhouse to see Gene, and this particular guy greeted me just with open arms. He was glad to see me. I know from appearance, he was the most unlikely manager you could possibly pick.

*But he must have been knowledgeable. He wound up going to the major leagues, you said.*

Very, and he was very successful managing in the majors. I think he managed Pittsburgh, but I'm not sure.

*Getting back to the hotels again, do you remember what hotel you stayed in San Francisco or Oakland?*

In San Francisco, I think, we stayed at the California Hotel. In Oakland we stayed at . . . what was the name of it? It was located back up in the hills.

*Oh, the Claremont?*

The Claremont, right. We stayed there. Most of the hotel accommodations, though, were pretty good. We were well taken care of.

*Yes. You were a top-flight minor league, so you got good treatment.*

Right. I think the league at that time demanded that the travel was good, the hotels were good. I think those were league regulations.

*When you went away on a road trip, like when you went to southern California, how long were you gone? A week, or two weeks?*

Always at least a week, and most of the time we'd be on the road fourteen days and home fourteen days. Then to the north—fourteen days and home fourteen days.

*During the war weren't there any restrictions as far as black-outs, because early in the war it seemed like there seemed like there were black-outs in California?*

That's strange that you should bring that up, because that is true. You couldn't even drive along the coast with the lights on in your car, but yet the lights were on in all the ball parks. There was a strange feeling during those war years, and I think it's worthy of mention. There was a strong feeling that the public in general needed a lift. They needed something to get their minds off of . . .

*Build their morale.*

Right. And they figured it was a great morale builder. And all these Coast League games were broadcast to the troops overseas, and the ships on the high seas. All these games were broadcast, because when a ship would come into port, we got a goodly crowd from the ships and the army bases. The army bases all had teams, and all the Coast League teams would play army bases, and that was a great morale builder, too. So there was a strong feeling that baseball did a great deal towards supporting the war effort, and frequently at the games they would sell war bonds and war stamps at the games, and that was a big help.

*When you traveled on the trains, you had your own car, you say?*

Yes.

*Were there troop trains involved, or did you ever get pulled off to the side while a troop train went by?*

No. That never happened.

*So most of the players, of course, either physically didn't qualify to go into the service, or they had wives and families?*

Right. Now and then, someone would be drafted out of the Coast League, though. Every now and then, they would pick up somebody from the Coast League. And also, we had veterans coming back into the Coast League, particularly after the war. We had veterans coming back and re-entering the Coast League.

*You played, of course, during the war years, and you played after the war years. Was there a noticeable difference in the caliber of the ballplayer?*

I didn't notice any great difference. We got some good players back from the war, but, actually, the caliber of play, I think, was pretty much the same. All the years that I was in there, I always felt that we were in a good league with a lot of good players, and every team was loaded with major leaguers that had come down, and every team was loaded with prospective, young guys on their way up, too. We had a kid out of San Francisco with us, Penrose, who made the All-Legion Team in the Bay area and had graduated as an All-Star player in the San Francisco League, and Lou Penrose was with us at Sacramento. Teddy Greenhall, fresh out of high school, was with us at Sacramento and lived in Folsom. And Richie Meyers, fresh out of high school, but a great prospect—he was with us at Sacramento. Richie later went on up to the majors, and he is living in Sacramento today and attends a lot of those baseball banquets.

I remember Richie, in particular, because when Richie was quite a star at Sacramento, I was pitching for Seattle, and Seattle played Sacramento, and they were pitching a veteran, Beasley, against the young kid coming up for Sacramento, and I beat him that day, and that night the ball park burned down. So Richie and I get together every winter at those baseball banquets, and the Sacramento papers did quite a story on it last year—of the burning of the ball park. And they interviewed both Richie and myself.

*Pitched the last game.*

Yes, concerning that last game in there before it burned down.

*Do you have another story, Bud?*

Yes. I think my first few years at Sacramento we had as our trainer, Jack Downey, the old prize fighter, and he wasn't the greatest of trainers, but, evidently, he had quite a career in the late 1930s and 1940s as a prizefighter. As a matter of fact, he at one time fought Jack Dempsey and lost to Dempsey, of course, and he tells the story on himself that—and he was very proud of the fact—that he lasted six rounds with Dempsey. He said that sixth round, it was scheduled for a ten-round fight, and he went six rounds against Dempsey, which was quite a feat in itself, but he said in the sixth round Dempsey met him in the middle of the ring to shake hands, and it was scheduled for a ten-round fight. [laughter] And he said to Dempsey, "Hey, Jack, this isn't the last round."

Dempsey said, "As far as you're concerned, it is." [laughter]

And he said, "Sure enough, I got knocked out in the sixth round." [laughter] But the story went around, and it's a true story, because I actually saw it happen.

As a trainer, he liked to tell stories about his prizefighting days, and he'd get so involved in the story that he'd be taping someone up on the table, and when he'd turn around to get another piece of tape, the guy would take that ankle off and put the other one up, and Jack never knew the difference. [laughter] And they even pulled this on him one time, and I saw this happen. He was taping Tony Freitas, I think, and when he turned around to get the tape, all the time talking about his prizefighting days, when he turned around Freitas jumped off the table and Jack Calley got up there. [laughter] Jack didn't notice a difference. He put his tape around him. [laughter] So he was extremely absentminded, but a loveable, old guy, and bald headed. He had one of those bald heads that it would shine, and I'll never forget one night, Marcucci was batting and got hit with the pitch, and he's laying out there rolling in the dirt, and they're calling for the trainer to come out and take care of him, and he didn't want to go out with his bald head. [laughter] No one would loan him a cap. And he keeps saying, "Come on, Marc, get up. You're not hurt." [laughter] But he wouldn't go out to take care of him. [laughter] And as well you know, an injury back in those days . . .

By the way, that's quite another difference in baseball today and baseball of bygone years. A lot of the players chew tobacco, and you weren't considered a ballplayer in the old days unless you were a tobacco chewer, and they were chewing tobacco and spitting all the time. Well, thank God, we did get away from that. I never participated in it myself, but played with a lot of ballplayers that were tobacco chewers. And today there's sunflower-seed chewers or bubble-gum chewers. [laughter] But a common saying in baseball then—if you were hit by a pitch or something—they'd say, "Oh, spit a little tobacco juice on it, and get back in the ball game."

They were a rough, tough bunch, and you didn't come out of the ball game for a slight injury, the way you do today. You hung



in there. And another chief difference, I think, back in those days all the pitchers were supposed to go nine innings.

Today, if you go five, they're very happy with you. "Hey! You went five. You did a good job." [laughter] In comes a long relief and then the short relief.

*And then the middle relief.*

Yes. And seldom ever does a pitcher go the nine innings. And another chief difference I see today is they count the pitches. Each pitcher, the manager knows and the statistician knows from keeping statistics on you, that you're an eighty-pitch pitcher, or you're a hundred-and-twenty pitcher, and seldom ever do they go more than a hundred and twenty pitches, even the University of Nevada. If he gets in a hundred pitches, they start watching him now. "Hey. He's good for maybe twenty more pitches, and that's it." And in those days nobody kept track of the pitches. They did have the gun on you, though, and they could tell if you began to slow down. Then they got a little worried. If you're slowing down and getting away with it, all right, they'd leave you. But with that gun on you, if they saw you weren't throwing ninety anymore, they became concerned. If you weren't throwing ninety, and they started hitting you, the bull pen is warming up.

*Now they have people that just count the pitches, that's all.*

Yes, right. They count those pitches, and the gun is on you, and in the major leagues every pitch they're flashing the speed of that pitch up there on the screen, and that's a relatively new thing. We never had any of that, of course. Television was just beginning to come into the Coast League. In the late 1940s, they were beginning to televise, and that was a rather novel thing.

*That brings up another point. Today, even in college baseball they'll have a manager or a coach, and three or four or five assistants. How many assistants did Pepper Martin or Dick Bartell have when they were managing?*

One. One assistant. And frequently the assistant would hit infield practice. My first year at Sacramento, Sheely would hit infield practice, but in my last years there he didn't. They'd have one of the assistants do that.

*Did they call them coaches or assistants?*

Assistant coaches. Herman Pillette was the pitching coach. Sheely was the overall manager and so forth.

*Did they have a hitting coach, too, or an infield coach?*

In the last part of it they did, but now, I can't imagine Lefty O'Doul having a hitting coach, because he was so good at it himself. But he had assistants that would hit infield practice.

*And maybe coach the bases?*

Right. Coach the bases. Lefty always coached at third. And another big difference today is the assistant coaches are coaching the bases. I've never seen a manager out there coaching the bases. He never gets out of the dugout. But he must be in uniform. And in those days the manager had to be in uniform, as did the assistant coaches, but the assistant did the base coaching. Frequently, I got to coach first base, though, at Sacramento and at Seattle, and in the Willy Loop I spent a good deal of time working with pitchers and coaching first base, and spent a lot of time in the Willy Loop as a base coach, as well as working with the pitchers and that type of thing.

*But you were carried on the roster as an active player?*

Right. And a relief pitcher. But I was over the hill then.

*Well, we'll stay when you're still on the hill. We'll stay in the Coast League for a little bit. [laughter]*

Right. [laughter]

*Do you remember when they started wearing batting helmets?*

First year in the Coast League they didn't wear batting helmets.

*So that would be 1944?*

Right. And by the way, that was borrowed from Little League baseball. The Little Leaguers, they wanted to protect those kids, and those kids weren't too quick at getting out of there on a pitch, and that sort of thing. So the Little League actually came up with the first batting helmets that I ever witnessed. But in the Coast League, finally, in the late 1940s and 1950s, of course, they went to batting helmets, and they began to go to batting gloves, also. You saw few of them, like Joe Brovia, Ferris Fain. Some of those guys would wear batting gloves. But at first, we didn't have batting gloves in there.

And by the way, there's another thing. In the first years, the 1940s, in the Coast League, we didn't have designated hitters. All pitchers hit for themselves. And frequently, the only day that you got to take batting practice was the day you were going to pitch. [laughter] The rest of the time there was no batting practice.

*Yes, that's for sure. The designated hitter didn't come in till much later.*

Right.

*You know another thing was that in the old days, players would leave their gloves on the field. Do you recall that?*

Yes. [laughter] That was common practice. When the side was retired, you just threw your glove out there and came on in.

*It's really amazing when you look back on it, why you threw your glove out in the field? You just left your glove on the field.*

Right.

*Why didn't they always carry it back to the dug out? Because you'd look out there on the infield or the outfield, and there'd be six, seven gloves laying out there.*

Another fabulous difference is in the catcher's glove. The catcher's glove today is like a first baseman's mitt. That old catcher's glove, as you will remember, was that hard leather deal, and it was common practice to soak the glove in a bucket of water. [laughter]

*To soften it.*

Yes, to soften it up. So there's quite a difference there. Well, today's baseball game is, actually, apples and oranges, the comparison. There are so many things different. The gloves are larger. The batting cage, by the way . . . there's something else. The batting cages today are so different, so much more sophisticated. And a lot of the teams—I didn't see it in the Coast League, but in the Willy Loop—they'd roll the batting cage off to the side, and it would be out in foul territory there someplace. [laughter]

*And how about pitching machines?*

The pitching machine is really making it tough on the pitchers today, because a batter can spend hours in there with that pitching machine and work on his weakness. So they've taken a lot away from the pitchers there.

Here's a rather interesting thing. Along in the 1940s, they started protecting the batting practice pitcher during batting practice. One of your own teammates was out there pitching against you, and at first we didn't have a screen or anything to protect us. And Ernie Lombardi, I believe, is the one credited with putting that protective screen up for the batting practice pitcher, because he was such a fabulous hitter, or a hard line-drive hitter that you took your life in your hands when you pitched to Lombardi. I pitched against him as a teammate, and I'll tell you, you really were very careful out there. He's hit line shots back to the box that, definitely, had they been at me, they would have taken me into center field.

So they started protecting the pitchers then, throwing batting practice. I never did like the screens. I've used them, but I never did like them, because there was an iron pipe across there and matting in front of you, but I was always leery that a ball would come and hit an iron pipe and glance off and hit you. And there's no way you're going to protect yourself against it.

*Well, you played for Sacramento for how many years?*

Nineteen forty-four, 1945, 1946. Sold to Seattle in 1947.

*So, were you sold outright, or were you involved in a trade?*

It was a trade, a four-man trade. Red Mann, Guy Fletcher, Ramsey, and Beasley were sent to Seattle. And Seattle sent four players to Sacramento. That was the largest trade in pro ball that

year. So it got a lot of publicity in the *St. Louis Sporting News* and every place, because of the size of the trade. And Bartell was the manager, so we were all very happy to go.

*Bartell managed Sacramento?*

Right.

*Who was managing Seattle, then, when you were there?*

Jo-Jo White was the field manager, and Earl Sheely, the business manager. Earl Sheely never came on the field, but he was in charge of the office.

*So Bartell wasn't a popular person to play for?*

[laughter] Really tough to play for. He'd just come down from the majors and wasn't too happy with coming down, took the job of managing, and, boy, he demanded perfection. I remember one time when they were going to pull a suicide squeeze, and the batter missed the bunt in the suicide squeeze. He called us all back out on the field after the crowd had left, and we had bunting practice for an hour out there, and you didn't get to go back to the shower until you laid down ten perfect bunts. He was a very demanding type of guy and fined you for everything, and a mean guy. One time he gave the order. He was in some argument with the third baseman when he was coaching at third, and he called time out and told the runner on second to come in with the spikes flying at the third baseman. And if you were pitching, you would get orders at least five times to deck the batter, to throw at him. So he was that kind of a ballplayer.

*Well, I don't recall him managing for many years. Was he successful?*

One year, I think, was it. [laughter]

*Anywhere?*

Yes. That's right. One year at Sacramento, and that was it. He didn't get along with the front office, either. There was a constant beef with the front office, with the stockholders. It's unfortunate, because he was a great competitor, but he just had this streak in him and wasn't at all popular with any of the players.

*Well, was that one of the reasons you were traded is you didn't get along with Bartell?*

That was *the* reason I think I was traded, because we didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things, and then, he couldn't stand my fooling around on the mound. He couldn't stand this wind up; he couldn't stand all the things that I did out there, that the fans loved. But he didn't care about the fans. He was, "Win at any cost," you know.

*So he didn't like the other fellows that got traded either, like Fletcher?*

Well, I don't think he liked any of us. [laughter] And when you get a guy like Joe Marty, and Tony Freitas, who pleaded with us when we were traded, "Hey, get me up there, too." They wanted to come with us, you know, and pleaded with us to put in a word for them. Tony Freitas is as nice a guy as you'd ever want to meet, and when you can't get along with a guy like Tony Freitas, you can't get along with anybody.

*Plus, he was talented. How many games did he win in the Coast League? He won hundreds of games in the Coast League, didn't he?*

Right. [laughter]

*Isn't he one of the winningest pitchers ever in the Coast League?*

Yes, he was. Another one was Bob Joyce. Twenty-game winner every year, and even a thirty-game winner, and one year a thirty-one-game winner. The year that Joyce and I battled it out for the league leadership, he won thirty-one games. I won, I think, fifteen or sixteen. [laughter] But I had a higher percentage then he had. But thirty-one games, how are you going to beat that?

*That's the kind of guy that the manager wants to get along with.*

Oh, you better believe it. You better believe it. I think some mention should be made of perhaps one of the best shortstops in the league, Roy Nicely. He played for Lefty O'Doul and the Seals and was probably the worst hitter in the league. His batting average was about .121, but he was a great fielder. And there again, as I understand it, Roy Nicely was an average ballplayer, but Lefty O'Doul had that knack of getting the most out of you. Nicely was a *fabulous* fielder, but no hits, and I personally always hated to pitch against him, because, what if the guy accidentally gets a single off of you? You could tell by the way he swings, you hope, that he's not going to hit you, but what if he accidentally gets a hit off of you? [laughter] It was a disgrace. It was a total disgrace if Roy Nicely hits you. Luke Easter and Jack Graham and Joe Marty and those guys, if they got a hit off of you, hey, so what. Joe Brovia—he hit everybody. And Ted Williams—he hit everybody. [laughter] But actually, I don't know why, but I had a fear of those poor hitters. Hey, sooner or later, they are going to get a hit. [laughter] If they hit you, there goes your reputation.

*Who were some of the others? Well, before we talked about like Lou Novikoff, a great hitter with the Los Angeles Angels team.*

Well, Graham was very good.



*Was that Jack Graham?*

Yes. And Al Wright. I think he played for San Diego and for Hollywood. They were great hitters. Joe Brovia, great hitter. Joe Marty, of course, a great hitter.

*Was Dino Restelli in the league?*

Yes. Great hitter. And there was Earl Rapp, a long-ball hitter. But believe it or not, the great hitters, they'd hit me, but I didn't have as much trouble with them as I did those punch hitters, those single hitters, you know. Like Gene Handley. And Schuster was very good at that, too. Schuster is not likely to hit a home run off of you, but you're not going to get him out, that's for sure. He's going to hit the ball. And Handley and Jo-Jo White—there's no way that you're going to strike them out, and they were tough, really tough. One of the things that made them tough is they hit where you were pitching. If you pitched the outside, they'd hit to the opposite field. And if you pitched it on their hands, those guys would manage some way to get hit with a pitch. They'd stick their arm out or something else. [laughter] They were just tough to get out of there.

*When you went to Seattle, was Jo-Jo White still a playing manager?*

Yes. He was a playing manager, then, and he was a good one, knew his baseball, great strategy. One of my catchers was Rollie Hemsley, that had just come down from being Bob Feller's catcher, and Rollie Hemsley and Joe didn't get along too well. Hemsley was constantly second guessing him as the manager. And Jo-Jo really was second guessing him. So they didn't get along real well.

*Wasn't Hemsley kind of a party guy?*

Yes, he was, and then Hemsley always resented that he got sent down. He thought he should still be up there. I liked pitching to him. He was good. A very strange thing about Hemsley, he had a fabulous ability to detect whether a foul ball was foul when he was catching. If he flipped that mask and started back to the screen, that ball's in the park. And if that ball isn't in the park, if he didn't flip the mask and turn, that thing would come down a foot outside. [laughter] But he had a fabulous knack at knowing that. And then he had a very strange throw to first base. It wasn't a quick throw, but he got it away so quick that he'd pick guys off of first base, not with the quickness of the throw, but he knew exactly when to pick them off, and that made a difference, too.

*He was a little older when he came down?*

Yes, he was long in youth when he came down.

*Because he had some good years in the majors, like you say, especially with Bob Feller and Cleveland.*

Yes, he did. He sure did. Incidentally, he was another catcher that all my movement out there didn't bother him too much. It bothered him some. One who loved to catch me and my style didn't bother him a bit was Lilio Marcucci. He went right along with it. So Marc liked to catch and was also a good hitter. Another strange thing, while we're still on baseball, but believe it or not, Marcucci could stand on the fifty yard line of a football field; he'd have a half a dozen footballs and not place kick, but drop kick them. On the fifty yard line he'd drop kick that goal, turn around, and drop kick the next one. And he was one of the few football players, pro or anybody, that I'll ever see do that.

And when he left the Coast League he coached football one year at Christian Brothers, there in Sacramento. And then, he

began to manage in the California State League, later on. But he was just a good, solid baseball player.

*Didn't he eventually settle down in Reno?*

Yes. Well, he lived here and worked at the clubs down there.

*As a food and beverage manager?*

Yes. As a matter of fact, at one time he worked at what is now Baldini's [then the Shy Clown]. And then, I think he worked for Harrah's, also, food and beverage. Then he went back to Sacramento and was in the pizza business down there.

*Is he still alive?*

No, he passed away just about two years ago, and I had a card from his wife just the other day, because she knew we were such great friends. But I really enjoyed the playing years with him, because we were roommates frequently on the road.

*You had your best years in the Coast League, then, when you were with Sacramento, is that right? Or did you have some good years at Seattle, also?*

Well, actually, I was over the hill when I went to Seattle, even, and they knew that, too, so they used me in relief, mostly. Although, when we'd play Sacramento, I'd always get a starting job against Sacramento—on the road and in Seattle. [laughter] And I'd get the starting job in Sacramento, because it drew the crowd. I learned later that the board of directors in Sacramento always requested that I pitch when we'd come to Sacramento. But I was actually over the hill when I went to Seattle.

*Those were two top towns there in the Coast League, Seattle and Sacramento. Were there any similarities between the two teams? Were you treated the same, or was the salary better at one? Were the traveling conditions better?*

Good question. The salaries were better in Seattle, and the team was better at Seattle. I figured I was with a tougher team. They got runs for you. If you were pitching, you could count on Seattle giving you five or six runs. You couldn't always do that at Sacramento. Then, of course, my relationship with Jo-Jo White and Earl Sheely was a very strong, compatible relationship, and I thoroughly enjoyed playing for Earl Sheely and Jo-Jo White. The treatment was great, the living conditions better, the food better, the travel better, and a better league. I felt that I was with a better team in the league at Seattle. You had a better chance of making the play-offs.

*Did you have the same arrangement with them, where you wouldn't start the season until you were done with school?*

Yes. Although, it wasn't as convenient as Sacramento, because I could drive down to Sacramento, whereas, Seattle I couldn't. So I was more limited then, but I wasn't used as a starter as much in Seattle as I was in Sacramento. In Sacramento, before Dick Bartell came along, I was working three games a week pretty much through the whole season, and even when I was back in school, I'd go down and pitch in the middle of the week. In Seattle, that began to ease up quite a bit, and I wasn't used as a starter in Seattle as much. Against certain teams that I'd had good luck against—San Diego, for instance, and Oakland—I'd get to start, but most of the time at Seattle I was used in relief.

*During the summer you did move up to Seattle and live in Seattle all summer?*

Right, always. And the town was very good to me up there, also. I enjoyed playing for them. I had a good relationship with the town people. I'd go to service clubs up there. I belonged to Kiwanis, and, incidentally, being a member of Kiwanis was a big factor all the time in the Coast League, because every town I played in I'd be a guest speaker of the Kiwanis Club in those towns. So I'd make those luncheons in Hollywood and Los Angeles, San Diego, Seattle. Every place where there was a Kiwanis Club, somehow they knew that I was a Kiwanian, and I believe it was my second year when I was with Sacramento, my second year I was elected president of the Reno Kiwanis Club. Well, that word got around, too, that hey, here's the president of the club playing in the Coast League. [laughter] So, naturally, I spoke. I had a luncheon engagement continually, and that helped out in the meal money, too, because you were getting free lunches every place. [laughter]

*When you went up to Seattle and lived there for the summer, did your wife Nellie go with you?*

No, she didn't.

*Oh, she always stayed home?*

Yes, right. The wives didn't travel with the team a great deal, then, just once in a while, and not too many of them lived in the town with the players. There wasn't a family deal.

*So all summer you'd be without your wife, then?*

Yes. Right.

*And a lot of the ballplayers did that?*

Yes. I'd say most of them. But she was deeply involved in softball at the time and deeply involved in bowling, which she still is. She just finished coaching the league bowling team, and she worked yesterday with the Washoe High Bowling Team. So she's still very active in bowling and was even more so back there then, plus playing softball herself.

*She had to stay home, anyhow.*

Yes, she had to stay home anyhow. [laughter]

*So, you consider the Seattle years some of your better years, as far as not playing ball?*

Yes. I enjoyed it immensely. I liked the town—beautiful town—and was treated very well by the fans.

*They had a nice stadium, too?*

Very nice. One of the better ball parks in the league.

*What was it called?*

Rainier Park, located out on Rainier Avenue.

*Is there a connection with Rainier Beer?*

Rainier Beer was our sponsor. They owned the ball club, and, therefore, we were well financed, too. One of the interesting things, though, in the years at Sacramento . . . . They lost baseball at Sacramento, I think, for a year or two. Then they brought it back, and when they brought it back, they sold stock to the people. So everybody in Sacramento owned a piece of that ball club. The taxi drivers, the laundry workers, the waitresses—they all owned

a piece of the ball club, maybe twenty-five or a hundred dollars a share.

*So they could all tell you what to do?*

And they all felt that, "Hey! That's my team." Those first two years, there was a fabulous camaraderie with the whole town, because everybody in town owned a piece of the ball club. And that wasn't true at Seattle. The brewery owned and ran it. Wasn't that also true at Portland? I think a brewery owned that. What was the name of that brewery? But the brewery owned Portland, too.

See Portland and Seattle were the big rivals up there. With Sacramento, it was Sacramento and San Francisco, Sacramento and Oakland. That was the rivalry. But when Seattle and Portland played each other, there was a packed house. So, when I was playing with Seattle, that big rivalry then was with Portland, and it was a little tough to get used to that, a new opponent there, but the playing conditions were great, the field was great, and I enjoyed that immensely.

*We've talked about fields there earlier, and we didn't finish. You mentioned that you and Richie Meyers pitched the last game before the stadium burnt down in Sacramento. Was that Edmonds Field?*

No, Edmonds Field was the new one. This was Moring, I think, a very old ball park. It was a very old field. I don't know how old it was, but it had a wooden structure and all of this.

*What year did it burn down?*

It was my first year at Seattle, so it must have been 1948.

*So, when they built the new stadium, they built it in a different location?*

No, same location. But now they used cement, steel, and so forth—a good ball park. That old one must have been at least fifty years old. It was at Riverside and Broadway. Oddly enough, because it was a wooden structure, and because all the hot dog papers and cigarettes dropped down between the bleachers, every Sunday there was a fire, [laughter] but they had fire extinguishers under there, and every so often they'd have an attendant go under there and put out a little fire. Of course, rumor has it—and it may be more than just rumor [laughter]—that about that time, the ball club was beginning to lose money. I like to think one reason they were losing money is I wasn't putting on the show. [laughter] But that is very conceited. But anyway they started losing money. So, rumor has it that it wasn't an accident that burnt the ball park down.

All the Sacramento ball players had suits of clothes in their lockers when they turned in their losses. [laughter] Suits of clothes, shotguns, fishing gear, saxophones, that they all wrote in the report that they had in their lockers. [laughter] Even the insurance sensed that there was no locker in there that could have held all the equipment that the ballplayers claim they lost. [laughter]

*Well, it was named Edmond's Field? The new stadium was named Edmond's Field?*

After the sportswriter—Dick Edmonds, I think, a great sportswriter—so they named the field after him. He was very good, a great sportswriter.



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## WESTERN INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

*What year did you leave Seattle, and how did you happen to leave?  
They released you?*

No, they didn't release me, but they wanted me to go into the Willy Loop, and they were talking about my managing . . . . What was that team from Montana that was in the Willy Loop?

*Lewiston? Oh, no, that's in Idaho.*

Yes. They also had a working agreement with Vancouver, and what they wanted me to do is go from Seattle into the Willy Loop, either to Vancouver or to Montana, but they wanted me to go into the Willy Loop as a drawing card, again, because they were having some attendance problems. So, they thought, "Hey, let's send this guy up there. He's got a year or two left." Definitely over the hill, though.

*You're over forty by this time?*

Oh, yes. Definitely. So, I didn't get out and out released, but when they said, "Go into the Willy Loop," no, that was it. I couldn't handle that.

And as I think I may have told you once before, that seeing Babe Ruth and Dizzy Dean and those guys come down, where they weren't really helping the club, I had my mind made up already that once I got out of the Coast League, that's going to be it. At the same time as I was over the hill—it was in, I think, Mexicali and that group in there—but the Reno pro team was wanting me to come home and manage here or pitch here. And no, I couldn't see that. That was just more than I wanted to handle. So, I made up my mind that, "No, I'm not going into the Willy Loop."

So, instead, I went to Stanford and worked on my degree and kept getting letters from Brown up there, "Hey! Come to Vancouver." So, the next year I decided, "All right. I'll go." The salaries were great. The salaries then were better than the Coast League salaries, and the playing conditions were good, except I was back riding the bus that first year in the Willy Loop, and that was a little tough to handle, but Brown was a good guy to play for.

*Who was Brown? Was he the manager?*

He was the manager and owner, but financed by Seattle.

*So Brown was in Vancouver?*

Yes. Vancouver. And the salary was good. Bad field. That first Vancouver Park was really a bad one, and it wouldn't compare with Threlkel's out there. So a bad park, bad locker rooms, and travel by bus, and that was tough to take.

*Yes. They were long trips.*



Bud Beasley (left) and Sandy Robinson with the Vancouver Capilanos, 1955.

Oh, really long. But the salaries kept getting better. The stadiums kept getting better. We built a new ball park, and I liked that. I enjoyed that beautiful country up there, too, so that was a big factor. I began to like the Willy Loop. I was getting a good vacation, that, hey, somebody was paying for, you know. [laughter]

*You had to work in the summertime, anyhow.*

Right. So, I enjoyed those years. Although, there again, over the hill, but they did have me work with some of the young pitchers. When Schuster was there, I even got to make some decisions, some of the strategy. We'd be at a tough ball game, maybe two runs behind, and Schuster would come down and say, "Get me a couple of runs."

And I'd say, "OK. All right." So, maybe I'd put in a pinch hitter or a pinch runner, lay down a bunt, or use a lot of hit-and-run plays. I started more and more doing that sort of thing.

*Was Billie Schuster the field manager, then?*

Well, that's strange. [laughter] He was the field manager, but the shots were still coming from Brown up in the front office. And I looked upon him as the field manager, but then a couple of times, when I didn't think I was going to pitch . . . and when I wasn't pitching I was running in the outfield, because I wanted to be in better shape than the rest of the guys, or I'm not going to

stay in this league too long, see. [laughter] So a couple of times I'm out there running, doing my laps, because I'm not going to pitch tonight, and Schuster would say, "Hey, I've had orders you're pitching." They'd give him the orders that I'm pitching tonight, see. So I knew that they were second guessing him all the time, but he didn't care. He was having fun and getting paid. [laughter] So he didn't care.

*You said the money was pretty good in the Western International League. What was pretty good money?*

Well, when I was turning down, I just didn't want to go. They sent a telegram, and I'll never forget the telegram had said, "Regards to salary, you name it."

So I said, "Fifteen hundred." And I thought, "Hey, fifteen hundred that's it." That was just for signing. [laughter] Then the salary was on top of that, you know. So, the salary at that time was around five to eight hundred, five to a thousand dollars.

*Per month?*

Yes. It was good.

*Was Seattle paying part of that salary?*

I think so. Yes. Because Bill . . . what was the guy's name that owned Seattle at the time? I should never forget that. Skip, I think it was.

*Emil Sick?*

Emil Sick. Emil Sick was the owner, and I was sitting in on a stockholders meeting one night, and he wrote them a check for a million dollars, and he said, "Try to make this last for the rest of

the year,” you know. But he wrote a check that night for a million dollars. So I know he was heavily backing it.

*Well wasn't he the owner of Rainier Brewing Company?*

Yes. And by the way, I had a good job when I was playing for Seattle, that I got paid for. One of my jobs was to go around to the high schools and go around to service clubs and give talks and recite *Casey At The Bat*. And public relations—I was doing public relations for the brewery, and I will never forget going into Lincoln High School, I think it was, that was near the ball park, and here I'm doing public relations for a brewery in a high school. [laughter]

But most of it was the ball club connection, and then they used me to put on baseball clinics for the high school coaches. So I'd do that, too. I was being used a lot in public relations when I was with Seattle, and relief pitching now and then, and if there was some big charity for milk for the little kids or something, I'd get to pitch that night. [laughter]

*Did you do some PR work with Vancouver, also, or was that just with Seattle?*

Yes. I did that also with Vancouver, and I enjoyed doing it, because since it was service club related, it worked right in. It just was a natural for me.

*We mentioned that the bus trips were pretty long. Who were some of the other teams in the Willy League?*

In the Willy Loop at that time, we had Salem. Salem was in there, and Eugene was in there, and Calgary at one time, and Edmonton and Vancouver, Victoria, Tacoma, Spokane. They were all in that league.

*Wenatchee?*

Wenatchee, right, and Tri-City. We liked to go to Tri-City, though, because we stayed in a nice place there, a nice hotel, and they had a swimming pool and all this. Spokane, the park was sort of on the dark side. Victoria, a darn small ball park. No one wanted to pitch in Victoria. We all had a sore arm when it was our turn to pitch in Victoria. [laughter]

*Well, just several hundred miles, when you're talking about Edmonton to Salem.*

Oh, yes. And I don't know whether you were in the league at the time, but do you remember, wasn't it Wenatchee, the ball club got wiped out? The whole ball club with a bus trip?

*Spokane, the bus went over, yes. Wasn't Vic Picetti playing first base for them, that kid from San Francisco?*

I didn't think it was . . .

*How about Lucky Lohrke?*

Yes.

*Yes. That was Spokane.*

Well, then it was, because Lucky Lohrke missed the bus, you know.

*Yes. That's how he got the name "Lucky."*

Yes. And then, later on, when he was playing for Hawaii or somebody, he missed the plane, and the plane went down. [laughter]

*Were you playing in the league when that bus went down?*

I was playing in the Coast League when the bus in the Willy Loop went down and wiped out the whole ball club just about, and wiped out one of our pitchers that I had played with and was on very friendly terms with, Powers. Dick Powers was with me at Sacramento. We were roommates, and he was sent to the Willy Loop, and that same year the bus got wiped out.

*I believe the bus went over. It was after a night game, and they drove over the side of the road.*

Right. And it was that famous pass there in Washington. When I was playing with Vancouver, the bus driver went to sleep, and we darn near went over there one night, too.

*Was that the Snoqualmie Pass?*

Yes. That was it. Boy, what a memory you have. But when the bus almost went over, I woke up when I heard that, and from there on in I talked to the bus driver. I kept him in a conversation. And some of the guys told Brown about it when we got back, and he gave me orders, "Hey! Sit in that front seat on all those bus trips, and keep that guy in a conversation." There was another one of my jobs. I had a dozen jobs besides playing baseball. [laughter]

*Cheerleader. Sell hot dogs between innings.*

I maneuvered myself into a position where they can't get rid of me, whether I can play ball or not. [laughter]

*How long did you last? How long did you stay with Vancouver then?*

Until 1955. That was my last year at Vancouver.

*Why did you finally quit?*

Well, it was, I think, mutual. I think they figured, "Hey, this guy . . . ." We had a good ball club. The year I quit we won the pennant.

*That was your last year, then, wasn't it?*

Yes. 1955. We won the pennant, and diamond rings went to all the players. And the club was so good that year that I could see they didn't need me. Gosh, they had a good pitching staff. They had good hitters. They dominated the league. The only one that was even close to us was Spokane. Those other teams, like Wenatchee and Tacoma, heck, we wiped them out. It was a foregone conclusion before we played them. So, now I'm on a real good team, and they don't need me.

*You didn't get that many innings?*

Right. I didn't get that many. Relief once in a while. But even then, they could win without me, easily. And I am over the hill. So I knew that this was the end. I think it was sort of a mutual agreement. I think I told them goodbye, and I came back early again, back to school. So, see, they're dealing with a guy that they don't need, and who isn't there half the time anyway. [laughter] So, I think when I told them goodbye, I said, "I expect a pink slip in the mail for the winners." [laughter] And we joked about it, but I didn't expect to be signed again. So it was a mutual agreement that I had served my usefulness.



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STOCKTON OLD-TIMERS

*Did you ever play baseball after that? Did you ever play semi-pro baseball around Reno, then?*

No, I didn't, but I came back to Reno, and I'm not going to play anymore. I've had it. I know that. Hey, I think I'm in my fifties then. And then a fellow in the jewelry business here had formerly played for Oakland, Ed Pimentel, and he was in the jewelry business here, and we became good friends. We'd go to games together and this sort of thing.

*Go to high school games, college games?*

Yes. College, high school, and semi-pro games around. Then he left the jewelry business here, because he got a manager job in Stockton in a jewelry store. So he went down there, and he organized the Stockton Old-Timers, the ex-Coast Leaguers and ex-California State Leaguers. Harry Clements, who was Mr. California State League . . . he got a lot of those old ballplayers in Stockton, and he organized them into the Stockton Old-Timers. All of

them had to be thirty-five or older. Well, hey, I fit into that beautifully. So they talked me in. They had a tough game coming up, where they'd never beaten this team, and I think it was San Francisco. He talked me into coming down and playing. And I was coaching baseball all the time, high school, so I was still in good shape. I could throw. Fast ball is gone. Curve ball hangs. [laughter] All this, but he conned me into coming down and pitching that one game. So I went down, stayed over night at his place, and pitched that game, and we won it. And hey, I had fun, particularly, meeting all these old guys that I'd played with and against, so I got the second game, the third, the fourth. So, I spent the next three or four years playing for the Stockton Old-Timers. [laughter] I came across Red Adams again down there. He was playing in one of those games.

*So how many years did you play in that Stockton Old-Timers League?*

I was with them about five years, and they made me a charter member and a life member of the Stockton Old-Timers. So I'm a charter member and a life member in the Stockton Old-timers, and that got me connected with the Stockton Baseball Hall of Fame. Well, it's just called the Stockton Hall of Fame, because it includes everything.

*All sports.*

Then, playing in that same league with me was Red Adams at one time, and Harry Clements, who was a former Coast League player and a long-time player for the Stockton ball club. And Ray Hamrick, who had played for Oakland. So I was in there with a lot of old-time Coast League ballplayers and California State League players. In our league at that time was Lodi, San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland, and we played some base teams, also.

*Military teams?*

Right. But it was mostly everybody thirty-five or older.

*Did you play every Sunday, then? You had a regular schedule?*

Sundays only. And it was hot. [laughter] So Sacramento was in there, too. One game, in particular, when we went to Sacramento to play, they had their Old-Timers baseball team, loaded with ex-major league and Coast League players. I'm sitting in the dug-out watching batting practice, because even then I'm still studying hitters. [laughter] I'm watching those hitters and sitting in the dug-out, and they're taking batting practice, and the Westlake brothers and a lot of my former teammates are on that team. I knew them pretty well, but I'm redoing my homework here, watching them, and they're hitting the ball out of batting practice. They are hitting four and five out of the park. And even my teammates said to me, "Holy cow! We've met our match tonight. Look at those guys." Son of a gun, I beat them, three to two. And we played a preliminary to the Sacramento-Seattle game. It was a preliminary to that game. The guys sitting in the dug-out watching our game said, "Hey, you'd better come back into the Coast League." [laughter]

*Put you on active duty.*

I had an exceptionally good night. Just one of those nights when you can't lose, you know, and another time you can't win. But I had an exceptionally good night that night and beat them. I got such a kick out of it, because they were my former teammates. [laughter] So, this was real fun.

*You played in that league four or five years, so you were at least fifty years old, then?*

Oh, yes. Easily.

*Well, those were probably the last baseball games you ever played then, was with Stockton.*

They were. That's the last time. And the last game I played was against Lodi, and they cheated on us. They used some of the Lodi players that had just finished playing in that California League. [laughter]

*Oh, boy. That's real young ones.*

Right. And there were about five of those guys that were probably thirty, but not thirty-five, and they beat me. I took a bad beating that night. They hit everything I threw. [laughter] They had more people on base than we had in the stands. [laughter] So, that told me something.

*So, after you retired from baseball, did you still continue going to schools to better yourself? You'd already been to Columbia?*

No, I'd finished most of my graduate work then. I was still coaching baseball, though, at Reno High, and was deeply involved in Reno High baseball and American Legion baseball. I'd also become very interested in collecting memorabilia from Reno High, and that's what got me started on this alumni building. I was collecting pictures and team pictures and trophies that were being thrown out, and yearbooks that were being thrown away. With former graduates dying and leaving letterman sweaters and trophies and team pictures, people just didn't know what to do with them, and some of them were nice enough to call me and say, "Gee, we don't want to throw this stuff away. What do we do with it?"

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So I'm bringing a lot of it home, and my wife is going bananas, because I'm loading up the house with everything, see. So, then I'm thinking, "What a shame that this isn't out where people can see it. I have it all here, but we've got to get some place to put it." Having come from a very strong alumni association in my own high school, and having my old baseball coach start up that alumni association in Santa Cruz, I thought, "Hey. Why can't we do the same thing here?" So, I even went down and visited their alumni association to see how they started it and what they did, came back up here, and went to the school board and talked them out of giving us a piece of land there. I started talking to my former players like Link Piazza and Al Solari and Earl Avansino, and getting the money with which to carry out the dream. So, we got it. There it is, off and running, and I'm spending a great deal of time now with that. I'm spending a great deal of time also with Beasley Elementary School, so I'm out of athletics but deeply involved in the perpetuation of keeping the records going.



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## PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

*We mentioned this earlier, but I'd like to ask you again. What graduate degrees do you have, and what colleges or universities did you receive them from?*

I did graduate work at Columbia, the University of Washington, Stanford, and the University of Nevada. So I have master's degrees in physical education and in school administration, and a doctorate of humanities. I have two master's and a doctorate, and I'm still teaching at Washoe High part-time, and I'm on my sixty-ninth year of teaching, which is by far the record in Nevada. No one's gone more than fifty, and I'm on the sixty-ninth, which is not only a Nevada record, but possibly a world record. I'm not gunning for any records. I'm happy doing what I'm doing, and as long as I'm happy doing it, I'll probably keep doing it.

*You said you had a master's in school administration. Did you act as a principal or vice-principal?*

No, I never did want it. I never did actually want to get in administration. It's too time consuming and more responsibility than I wanted. Besides, it would take me out of the classroom, and I enjoy the classroom, and I didn't want to go, particularly in administration. As Joe Sellers is finding out, and Benson found out, and Dick Trachok found out, with a lot of these administrative jobs, you're in charge of discipline. [laughter]

*And that's all.*

And that is a first class headache. [laughter] So, I didn't want to give that much time, and I didn't want to leave the classroom. I've had all kinds of opportunities to go into administration, but it doesn't have that fascination for me that coaching had and that actual teaching had.

*But did you have a philosophy in teaching that you wanted to establish a rapport with the student? What was more important to you, the student-teacher relationship, or the course that you were teaching?*

My philosophy is that the student is more important than the subject matter, and until you establish a rapport with the student, no matter what the subject, you're not going to get too much through to him, but if you get a good rapport going with the student, you're more likely to get the subject matter across. So to build that rapport, I go to their plays, their games, whatever they're doing in school—outside of my class. I make it a point to attend and take great interest. These kids that are in my class now, if they're playing baseball this spring, I'll be at their games. If they're in the band, I'll go to band, and I try to show an interest in their interests and build rapport that way. And rather than going into the classroom with the subject matter as number one, I go with this philosophy: What can I do to make desirable changes in them? Whatever that change is, if it makes them a better person, if it



makes them healthier, if it makes them better able to cope with the world into which they're going, do it. So, I work with my students now. I'll start out, "How many of you smoke?" And if I could get half of them to stop smoking, hey, I've done them a favor.

*What subject are you teaching at Washoe?*

Nevada government. And with the legislature in session, boy, it's gravy, you know. You can use the newspaper clippings and that sort of thing.

*How many classes a week do you teach now?*

I have one class that meets Mondays and Thursday nights, seven to nine.

*Tell us a little bit about these students. Are they students that were formerly in another high school?*

All of them are in either Washoe High for day school classes, or they're with Reno High, Sparks, Galena, McQueen. They're taking day school classes in all the high schools. Then, they come at night to take government. Now, they come at night to take government, because they can't get it in their day school schedule, particularly, if they are in band or athletics. They may not be able to get it all in there. And then, unlike past years, they're upping the credits that they demand in day school now. It's very difficult for them to get everything in in day school. So they'll come to night school to get it in. Quite a few of them failed it in day school, and they have to take it now, or they're not going to graduate this spring. So, quite a few are ones that couldn't cut it in day school, and they are back repeating it in night school. Here and there are one or two good students, though, who just can't

get it in their schedule. So, I have some good students that could cut it in anybody's school. Then, I have quite a few that would be dropouts if they took it in day school. We have a high dropout rate locally, anyway, so one of my jobs is to prevent dropouts, which I feel I do. A lot of these kids that I have probably would drop out. I have quite a few foreign students.

*Language problems?*

Right. Where there's a language problem, I really feel that I am needed with this group, that they need that extra help, and I like that. I like that rapport that I have, and I like the situation.

*Well, isn't government a required course to graduate?*

A required course, right. Every now and then, I get some kid in my class who the judge has sentenced into my class. He has a choice: my class or Wittenberg [Reno's juvenile detention center]. [laughter] So, I get one or two of those, too.

*About how many children are in your class?*

I have around twenty. Usually, twenty to twenty-six in my class, and that's about all that I have room for. My classes are held at Hug High School, and at night only, seven to nine at night.

*You taught and coached at Reno High from 1936 to 1976, is that right?*

Just about, yes.

*Over the years, of course, you coached many sports. We talked about that. What academic courses did you teach?*

World history, United States history, United States government, journalism. I put out the yearbook, taught P.E. [physical education], boys P.E., hygiene. Those are the main subjects that I covered. By the way, I started this jogging deal that's so popular here now. I started that in high school, back in the 1930s and 1940s. My P.E. classes were jogging all the time, before anyone was jogging around here. So I started jogging back there in high school, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, you ran. [laughter] Friday you could play basketball, football, touch-tackle football, flag football, box, wrestling, fencing. We even taught fencing, gymnastics.

I was the first one to introduce gymnastics into Reno High, the first one that brought baseball back to Reno High. They didn't have a baseball team till 1936, when I brought baseball back. And we didn't have a regular high school league, then. You played the university fraternities; you played the prison; you played town teams. There were only two or three high schools that were playing baseball at the time. But we had a team, and we played. That was the beginning of baseball at Reno High. Then, I had a very good gymnastic team. I was the assistant coach in football, assistant coach in basketball, and finally became the head basketball coach, and I was always the head baseball coach. That was about forty years of coaching, which also is a coaching record in Nevada. I don't think anyone else has coached that long in Nevada. So I don't know whether it's a record to be proud of, or whether it's senility that's taken over. [laughter] But I enjoyed those years of coaching. I had some great local businessmen that played for me, and I enjoyed them. Al Solari, who went on to star at UCLA, and Danny Hellman, of course. And Al Solari is very prominent in business here now. Then there's Pete Cladianos, I think, who you met. I had him in high school, and Don Carano of the Eldorado.

*Don Manoukian?*

Oh, by all means, Manoukian, definitely. And Jimmy Gardner of Gardner's Electric.

*Roger Trounday?*

And Harker and Harker, and Bill Raggio in the senate over there, and Kirkland is one my boys, too.

*Chief Kirkland?*

Yes. So, I enjoy visiting and seeing them, wherever I meet them.

*You've taught thousands of people through Reno High.*

True.

*And hundreds or, maybe, thousands of them have acknowledged the fact that you've made an impact on their life. Most of the people that I've talked to, that you've made a positive impact on, have turned out to be winners in their life.*

True.

*Did you have some losers that said, "Hey, that old man Beasley is a pain in the neck."*

[laughter] Yes, I was afraid you'd bring that up. Yes, along the way I've had some losers. I've had two or three end up in the penitentiary, and I think one of the humorous stories that I have on that, is one of my losers was in the penitentiary, but I was taking him the textbooks over and tutoring him in the penitentiary, for free. He still had an academic interest, so I was going over there. And one day the warden called me, and told me that

the kid wanted to see me. I thought, "Well, what could this be about?"

So I went over there, and he said, "You have to get me out of here."

And I said, "That's not going to be easy. But why do I have to get you out of here?"

He said, "You have to talk to the warden. You have to get me out of here. They just put my dad and my brother in here, and they're the two guys that got me in here in the first place." [laughter] And he said, "You have to get me away from them."

So, I think that's a rather humorous contact of the losers. And when you lose a kid, even if he drops out of school, it bothers you, but then, when you stop to think about it, Christ didn't win them all, either, see. One betrayed him at the last supper. [laughter] So, hey, if you have enough, you're bound to have a loser in there some place.

Fortunately, I've had far, far more winners than losers. As I told a group of my winners at a luncheon not too long ago, I congratulated them, because I said, "You people were a success in spite of me." Roger Trounday, one of my boys who's with John Ascuaga's Nugget, was recently inducted into the Hall of Fame, and I'm proud of those kids.

*You're in that same Hall of Fame, aren't you, as a coach?*

Right.

*And Roger went in as a player, of course.*

That's right. And this morning, I attended a breakfast honoring the humanitarian of the year, and I was inducted into that four, five years ago as the humanitarian of the year. Norm Dianda's also in there.

*How do you keep track of all these people? Do you have any kind of a filing system with their names, their addresses, or phone numbers on it, or anything like that?*

Yes, I do. I have binders and binders and binders out there with hundreds and hundreds of pictures of my former students, and I cut things out of the newspapers daily, if I see a former student in there. I read the obituaries, for instance, to see if I have former students there. And I cut all this out of the newspaper and paste it into these binders. I have rows and rows of binders of my former students that I've kept track of over the years, and some of them, of course, are in the paper all the time. Like Don Manoukian—he's always in there. [laughter] So, I've kept track of my former students and keep this running record of them. I'm taking clippings out of the papers and so forth all the time. And the *Silver and Blue* frequently features some of my players. Dr. John Kleppe up at the university in the engineering department—he frequently makes the newspapers, so I have him in there. And Dr. Pelter, Andrea Pelter.

I keep records and pictures. I have the most complete set of records. The fact that I still keep track of them, I think, helps, too. It even shows my students that I have now that, "Hey, this guy is interested in me as a person. See, it's not just a job for him. He's interested in me as a person," which I am, and if I can't be interested in them as a person, hey, I don't want to just be a teacher, and I do a great deal to establish that rapport with my present students.

*Do you contact them, like call them up on their birthday, or when you read their name in the papers?*

Frequently. And then, oddly enough, and a very nice thing that I deeply appreciate, is that they contact me, see. Like Bill Berrum and Art Kess, they want me to go to the university games

with them. I belong to two or three lunch-bunch groups of my former students where we meet and have lunch once a month. So I keep a very close contact with my former students. Joe Granata and Len Crocker are connected with the Alumni Center, and the Alumni Center is keeping me in contact with dozens of my former students, like Link Piazza. Every Saturday we're there at the Alumni Center together, and so I have and enjoy an excellent contact on a weekly basis with these former students.

*Last December, I believe, you were ninety years old?*

Right. Big birthday party. Loaded with my former students. The Manoukians were there, of course. Don was one of the hecklers, one of the roasters, and his sister, Jackie, she shows up almost every place I show up.

*Where was that party held?*

It was held at the California Building [at Idlewild Park], and it was to raise scholarship money for these kids that are graduating now. Then I also had two birthday parties out at the Beasley Elementary School. And a goodly number of the teachers in the Washoe County system now, are my former students, so I keep a good contact with them.

*How many people do you think showed up at your birthday party at the California Building?*

Oh, about four hundred. [laughter]

*We mentioned earlier you had seventeen foster children. I imagine a lot of them were at your birthday party, too.*

Yes, they were. They came up from California and different places for that.

*Did they roast you quite a bit?*

That they did. [laughter] Yes, they did. But I enjoyed that. That's fun. Don Manoukian laid it on me pretty good. Dick Trachok did, too. I had Trachok at practice teaching, and then I coached with Trachok for a number of years, too. He was the head football coach, and I was his line coach, so we had some very enjoyable years together.

*Did you get to roast them back a little bit?*

Always. I'm never going to let anybody get ahead of me on that. [laughter]

*Now, you never taught English at Reno High, but there were some good English teachers out there when you were there, is that right?*

Very good. Now and then, I would substitute for an English teacher, Frances Humphrey. I substituted a couple of times for her English classes, and she was a very fine English teacher, but she started out at Reno High as a P.E. teacher. And, by the way, she graduated from Reno High and played basketball, girls basketball, at Reno High. Then, she went to the university and taught English for years and years at Reno High after she got out of physical education. She's still around, comes to our class reunions, is in her late nineties, but still going strong. Has a lot of memories; we share a lot of memories of those old days at Reno High. Another English teacher at Reno High was a very fine English teacher, but she taught English more like a coach. Boy, she gave them a pep talk; she cussed them out, and, I mean, cussed them out, too. She later became a city council woman, on the Reno City Council. And on the Reno Council she was rough, tough, rock, and sock. Came out here from New York, had a New York accent, but a very, very fine English teacher.



*What was her name?*

Florence Lehnern, and at one time she lived right across the street here from me. The students will never forget Florence, because, as I say, she was rough and tough in the classroom, and she wouldn't get away with it today, but she'd walk right down there and slap a kid out of his seat if he wasn't paying attention. [laughter] But very knowledgeable.

Another one that I thought was exceptionally good was a gal by the name of Blythe Bulmer. She was in college the same time I was, graduated from college, taught for years and years. I think she got in thirty, forty, fifty years at Reno High. Also, she was very active in little theater, and took part in all their plays. She had taught English and coached debate and drama and was an exceptionally fine teacher.

Mrs. Ernst was an exceptionally good math teacher. And another one that's still around that I see now and then is Andy Morby, who taught foreign languages. Spoke fluently seven languages himself and is still studying foreign languages, long since retired and living here in Reno, married to a very fine artist, and they still make quite a few of the class reunions.

Dave Finch was an outstanding principal. One year, I think, in about the 1950s, along in there, he was selected one of the five top principals in the state of Nevada. And the present principal of Reno High, Jan Ross, is a very outstanding principal. I had her husband, by the way, as one of my former students. She is doing a great job over there and is a big help with us on this Alumni Center.

Then we had in the ROTC at that time an outstanding Captain Hickman, that had the girls' drill team, known as the Huskiettes. He was outstanding as an instructor and played in the city league basketball team, had played for Provo in college, and had great rapport with his students. He is now General Hickman, retired General Hickman, and is deep in the Mormon

Church. He's gone on missions and that sort of thing, but has long since retired. He was an outstanding teacher.

And, of course, the late, great Herb Foster. When I moved to Reno High, he was the head coach, and the *only* coach. So I owe a great deal to him. Coached everything—football, basketball, track—and was an outstanding coach there for thirty, forty years, anyway, until he passed away in 1949, I believe. When he passed away I became the head basketball coach. But we had some very good teachers in those days: strict, tough, enforced a discipline that they couldn't enforce today. [laughter] But they got the job done.

*Well, you taught at Reno High from 1936 to 1976. In 1976, when you left Reno High, what did you do, then? Did you go right into Washoe High to teach?*

No, we didn't have Washoe High, then, but we had an adult education program that was strictly adult, no day school students were in that program, and it was before community college started. So we were serving the adult community in the same capacity that Truckee Meadows Community College serves now. We had all different classes. They could take shop and art and printing and homemaking and nursing, and finish up their high school diploma if they hadn't finished, or if they were working to improve their skills, like bookkeeping, typing. And we didn't have computers then, but we offered all kinds of business courses to help them in the jobs that they held in the community. So we had a regular adult program that was going, night school only, and I went into that.

*Where were those classes held?*

At the old Reno High School. Then we branched out and began to hold them at the old Reno High School and at Wooster High School when it was built, and that programmed expanded.

When community college came in, that killed the adult program, and we put in this alternative high school, which is Washoe High now. And I moved from the adult program into Washoe High, but in the meantime, I had gone from Reno High into Adaptive P.E. Adaptive P.E. was a program that I set up in the Washoe County system, and that was set up on a federal grant, and I was in that. I'd left Reno High, but was then at Hug High in the morning and Sparks High in the afternoon, and we had a similar program going that Ken Fujii ran, and it was in Wooster High and Reno High.

*Just what is Adaptive P.E.?*

Adaptive P.E. was for the kid that couldn't take regular P.E. due to physical handicaps, like if they'd had polio or been in a car wreck or blind. Any kid that couldn't take P.E. was in Adaptive P.E. Or if they broke their leg skiing, then we'd put them in Adaptive P.E. and design it individually for the type of kid that was in it. They have a broken leg, but they still exercise the upper body. If they were in a wheelchair, they could still play ping-pong and games like that, see. So, I was in that for three years, till the grant ran out. Then I moved from that.

*So there is no more Adaptive P.E. in Washoe County?*

No, not now.

*It was just on a short-term basis?*

Right. And unfortunately there are a lot of kids that don't get P.E. at all, and that's the reason I started it up, because here we had dozens of kids who were being sent to study hall or work in the office or something, and in four years of high school they had no P.E. of any kind.

*Sounds like such a great idea.*

It was fabulous, and it got the kids a lot of their P.E. credit, and got them active, got them doing something rather than being sedentary and doing nothing, see. So, a great program.

*So, currently, there's nothing like that at all?*

No, there's not, and there's a real need for it, a real need. I have a feeling that we're even cutting back due to these other subjects that're coming in, that we're beginning to cut back on P.E. and a lot of other courses, culture courses, for instance. We're not stressing those as much, because now we're hung up on math and science. What I think is going to happen is we're going to lose a lot of these social type programs, and I'm not so sure that we're going the right way in education. I feel maybe take the cream of the crop and make them scientists; take the cream of the crop and make them mathematicians. But for every kid, I'm not sure it's for them, just as I don't think every kid's for college. And we've gone overboard on our feeling that every kid must go to college. I don't solely buy that. And I'm probably wrong, but, still, it's my philosophy on education. One thing that proves that is those that go to college, the first year about 60 or 70 percent never make it to their sophomore year. To me, going to business college and some of those courses . . . or going to beauty college, even, and going into the service, like the Air Guard or National Guard out here. They can get their college education paid for if they want it, but I think we should develop some alternatives to college and concentrate a lot on the vocations, too. Community college is doing that now. They're going more for the vocational, and community college is serving a good purpose.

*They are raising the requirements to graduate now.*

Oh, wow!

*So much in mathematics and sciences.*

Right. And I believe in accountability and competency testing, but another thing, we're leaning too heavily toward teaching toward the test, you know, and I'm not sure that's good.

*That's always been true to a degree, I think, but now it's becoming more and more that way.*

Right. Well, I think one reason is that education is costing the legislature more and more money, and there's a feeling that we're spending 76 percent of the budget on education, including college, community college, and kindergarten-twelve. Seventy-six percent of the budget is on education, and they're looking at it thinking, "Hey, that's a lot. Are we getting our money's worth?" So, in taking a look at it, particularly, where there are a lot of dropouts and a lot of kids that aren't doing well, you've got to get a standard up here, but that standard is going to cause a lot of dropouts and a lot of problems.

There are kids right now that you can see that they're stressed out, emotionally upset, because, "Am I going to not pass the competency test and not graduate?" And hey, that's a pretty big thing, getting pressure from home, pressure at school, pressure from the legislature, pressure from the university to meet higher standards.

*And these kids work hard for four years, and then, if they don't pass that math test . . .*

That's it, they've had it. And hey, it's debatable whether Einstein could graduate from high school now, see, but he was highly successful in his field. [laughter]

*So you were in the Adaptive P.E. You were in the adult education class, and you stayed in the Washoe County School System one way or the other since 1976, and still.*

Right. Definitely, with all kinds of opportunities to go into administration. All kinds of opportunities to move into the green house over there at Central Administration, but I don't need that. I really am not too interested in that.

*Well, you're a teacher, not an administrator. [laughter]*

That's right. [laughter]

*Do you have any great love of poetry?*

Yes, very much so.

*Why is that? What do you attribute that to?*

To tell you the truth, I'm really not sure. I enjoyed it clear back in high school. I was writing poetry back in high school, and I don't know, there's just something about it that I really liked.

*Do you write poems, as well as memorizing poems?*

Yes. I've been published in *Ladies Home Journal*; I've been published in *Redbook*; I've been published way back when. But back in high school I was writing poetry, and here and there winning a contest, a free meal or something, you know, but it's just something I've always enjoyed. I have books and books of poetry that I read, and Shakespeare. Now, if you can imagine a baseball player enjoying Shakespeare. [laughter]

*That's a contradiction.*

Yes. It's highly contradictory. And I remember one time in Seattle, when the sportswriter came out to interview me, as you are doing, and he wanted to test the microphone, test my voice, he said, "Say something."

So I quoted poetry, "Night shall be filled with music, and the cares that infest the day, shall fold their tents like Arabs, and silently steal away." And hey, he took up on this. [laughter] He never heard this coming from a baseball player. But it's always been something very interesting.

*Well, when you write poetry, do you write romantic poetry?*

A little bit of everything. One of the first was . . . a play was coming to town on Huckleberry Finn, and in the school paper I wrote this poem about Huckleberry Finn, and it was published in the school paper. Then, to get publicity for the show they published it in the town paper. Lo and behold, one of the Clemens cousins of Mark Twain read it, and it was published in the Sacramento paper. And then, later on, it was published in the *Ladies Home Journal*. So clear back in high school I was beginning to get some of this stuff published. And all the time I was going to the university I was writing poetry and submitting it in the English class, and I saw it was getting attention, and I'm an attention getter. [laughter] When I saw it was getting attention, I pursued it further, you know. I just kept doing it.

*Did you ever recite poetry for your students or your athletes?*

Not a great deal. I did in assemblies, though, quite a bit in assemblies. For instance, as a rule, on Veterans Day they'd have an assembly to honor the veterans, and they'd have veterans come in and give talks and this sort of thing. And I recited "In Flanders Fields" on Veterans Day, and I had it shown on the screen, with the crosses, you know. This brought down the house. Then, occa-

sionally, if we had a losing team I'd recite a particular poem about a losing team, rather than one that was winning, and that went over big. So, from time to time, I did that.

*Did you ever recite poetry while you were waiting on the bus or going on a bus ride?*

Yes, that I did. I did that, too. Danny Hellman would get me into that frequently, and I'd recite *Casey at the Bat* or something pertaining to athletics. When I was around at these different service clubs I'd recite *Casey at the Bat*, and I did that at my birthday party. I'm going to do it in April for the University of Nevada baseball team. When Dusty Baker was up here, I was supposed to do that at that baseball banquet, but I had a night class, and I don't miss the night class for anything. Perfect attendance there for twenty years.

*Would you care to recite Casey at the Bat now for the tape?*

Yes. We could try it.

It seemed extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day;  
The score stood four to two, with but one inning left to play,  
And then when Cooney died at first, and Burrows did the  
    same,  
A wreath of sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.  
A straggling few got up to go, while in deep despair.  
The rest sat with that hope which springs eternal within the  
    human breast.  
For they thought if only Casey could get a whack at that,  
Sure, they'd put up even money with Casey at the bat.  
But Flynn preceded Casey, as did likewise Jimmy Blake.  
The former was a lulu, and the latter was a fake;  
So upon the stricken multitude grim melancholy sat;



It seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.  
But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,  
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;  
And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred,  
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.  
From five thousand throats or more, there went up a lusty yell.  
It reveled in the valley. It echoed in the dell;  
It socked upon the mountain side, it rolled across the flat,  
As Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.  
There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;  
There was pride in Casey's bearing, and a smile on Casey's face.  
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,  
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.  
Ten thousand eyes were on him as he wipes his hands in dirt.  
Five thousand tongues applauded as he rubs them on his shirt.  
And while the writhing pitcher grinds the ball into his hip,  
Defiance gleams in Casey's eye, a sneer curls Casey's lip.  
And now the leather-covered sphere came hurling through the air,  
But Casey stood a-watching it, in haughty grandeur there.  
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped.  
"Tain't me style" said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.  
From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and rockbound shore.  
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" someone shouted from the stand.  
And it's likely they'd have killed him, had not Casey raised his hand.  
With a smile of Christian charity, great Casey's visage shown;

He stilled the rising tumult; he made the game go on;  
 He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the sphere flew;  
 But Casey still ignored it. And the umpire said, "Strike two!"  
 "Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and the echo answered, "Fraud."

But one scornful look from Casey, and the audience was awed.  
 They saw his face grow stern and cold. They saw his muscles strain.

They saw that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.  
 The smile is gone from Casey's lips, the teeth are clenched in hate.

He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.  
 And now . . . and now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,

And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.  
 Oh, somewhere in this favored land, the sun is shining bright.  
 Somewhere bands are playing, somewhere hearts are light.  
 Somewhere men are laughing, somewhere children shout.  
 But there is no joy in Mudville—Mighty Casey just struck out.

[*Casey At the Bat* by Ernest L. Thayer first appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner*, June 3, 1888]

*That was fantastic Bud. [laughter] Thank you very much. We could hardly have had a tape without that on there. So, you're going to give it for the University of Nevada baseball team?*

Sometime in April.

*Some clubhouse meeting or a banquet?*

Well, this is dinner. It can't be the end-of-the-year dinner, but Gary Powers has asked me to do it for that baseball banquet for something. And he wanted me to do it when Dusty Baker came

up for that baseball dinner, and I would have, but that I had a night class.

*So he scheduled Baker the wrong night.*

Right. But I did this at different service clubs when I was playing ball. Boy, it went over big.

*But you must have several poems memorized, dozens of poems.*

Oh, yes. Lots and lots of them. I don't have this one down real well, yet. I gave it at that birthday party. *Casey's Return*. It's better, still. It's classic.

*Is that just recently written, then?*

No. I added some to it, and deleted some of it. I don't know who wrote the *Return*, but the setting now is a booing, and he's a bum, and he comes to bat. "And they call for Tony or for Pete, for bat boy, or for clown, for anyone, except the punk who threw our city down." [laughter] And he comes, and they all boo him, and they are all cheering the opposing pitcher, see. And this time he makes it, though.

*He hits the ball?*

Yes. He gets two strikes on him, and everybody's down. And boy, he hits it out of the park. [laughter]

*He redeems himself.*

Right. [laughter] "And now, ten thousand hats are thrown in air," see. "Ten thousand throw a fit, but no one ever found the ball that mighty Casey hit." And it ends, the original sequel, to this part:

. . . except in Mudville square,  
the bronze bust of a patriot, arms crossed, is planted there.  
And underneath, engraved in bronze, these words are engraved  
in flame,  
“Here’s a man that rose and fell, and rose again to fame.  
He blew a tough one in a pinch, but he faced the jeering  
throng.  
He came through hell and scampered back to prove where a  
champ belongs.”

*That’s great. A great and moral story, too.*

Yes, it is.

*Don’t give up. Just come back. Come back and do it. Do you still go to  
a lot of Reno High School and university games?*

I go to all the university games here at home. I haven’t missed one yet. Saw those three this last week. The first, horrible; the second one, as good a game as you’d ever want to see. They won it in the tenth inning. So I go to all university games. I go to quite a few of the high school baseball games. Two nights a week I spend in the softball games, slow pitch, because I have two teams of my former players in that softball league. Bill Berrum and Art Kess, Arzoian, are a couple of guys who play in that league.

Art spent the last two or three years in Egypt as a hydraulic engineer, working on the Nile River and working on the dam. I corresponded with him all the time he was in Egypt. And he’s been playing in that softball league, that slow pitch league, oh, I guess, five, six, seven years, as have Joe Granata and Bill Berrum. Well, all three of them were still very active in that slow pitch. And it’s a league. One league, you have to be fifty years old to play in it, the other one, sixty years old to play in it. And some of my players, former players, are playing in both leagues. I think

Berrum plays in both leagues. So does Arzoian, so does Art Kess. And Art Kess, of course, locally is big with New York Life. I'm trying at the present time to get Art Kess nominated to the board of directors, the national board of directors of New York Life. I think he'd be a good man in there: very intelligent, good athlete, and very well known in the community. I feel he'd be a real asset to the state of Nevada and New York Life.

*Does Roger Trounday play in that league?*

Rog was playing in there and was one of our better players, but he's had some health problems, and he's extremely busy with John Ascuaga's Nugget there. And John's a little reluctant to let him go. But Rog was a very, very good player. Matter of fact, when I was playing in the Coast League, I got Rog a tryout one time with Seattle. He was in the armed forces at the time and had just finished a ten-mile walk and came to baseball, and he wasn't quite ready for that. [laughter] But very good at football, basketball, and baseball. Then, too, Joe Granata, I think, was one of the original organizers of that team, in that softball league. They're all my former players. So every Monday and Thursday I spend my time in the softball league as an honorary—or ornery—coach. I do very little actual coaching, but I really enjoy seeing these kids stay with it. Ken Fujii plays in there, too, and Buddy Fujii is one of the pitchers.

And another one I'd like to mention, who played for years and years, is Howdy Davis, former coach at Wooster High and one of my boys. Great athlete in high school—football, basketball, baseball—he did everything. He did it well. And then he became a coach, as did quite a few of my former players. As a matter of fact, I had so many of my former players come back as my assistant coaches that the school board called me in and complained that I was building a machine and hiring all my own players back there. I had Fujii and Kitts and Claude Mayberry,

and, of course, Dick Trachok, who had had his practice teaching and coaching under me.

*Did Buddy Garfinkle coach for you, too?*

Oh, definitely. And it was true. I was hiring all my own players back. Mike Thompson was one that had become a very prominent coach down in the Concord-Walnut Creek area. So the school board was concerned that if I hire all my players back they're going to be more loyal to me than they are to the principal or the school board. I didn't see it that way, actually. But one time at a school board meeting I was asked, "Are you trying to build a machine here?"

And I said, "What's wrong with a machine? They understand our philosophy, they're graduates of our school, and it doesn't speak too well of our school if we can't hire our own graduates back. You're telling me that we didn't do a good enough job on them to bring them back on the staff." [laughter] I pointed out to them other members who had graduated from the high school that were in the English Department and other departments. "Why not in athletics?"

And they said, "You're trying to build a machine."

I said, "What's wrong with a machine? When this meeting's over, you'll go out and get in one to get home." [laughter] So we had some fun with that. "But I'd enjoy having them back and working with me." And they knew my system, and they knew the philosophy of the school. So I thought it was a great idea, and I did have a larger number of them on my staff.

*So, the school board never did stop it, then?*

Oh, no! They didn't stop it, but they were a little concerned about it. [laughter] By the way, you asked about Buddy Garfinkle,

and I have something I'd like you to see. I have over a hundred binders of my former students, their pictures in there, and who they married, and in many cases their first kids and so forth. I have over 11,000 students that I have actual clippings and pictures of. And I kept track of their record in the service.

There's something, too, I think we might discuss. During the war I was corresponding with hundreds of my former students out there, and frequently I would write to one and tell him, "Hey, just ten miles down the road in England is one of your old buddies." So they'd get together on the weekend, then, and have a party and celebrate, and they didn't even know they were that close together. This happened also out in the islands of the Pacific. A lot of them would be on the same island and were unaware that they were out there. But by writing to both of them, I frequently put them in contact with each other.

*How many binders did you say you had?*

One hundred binders, arranged by years. And they are arranged in the binder alphabetically, and card cataloged. To me it was a hobby. I wasn't doing it for any particular reason, but it was a hobby, and I wanted to keep contact with them. My rapport with my former students is very important to me. I still wine and dine and lunch with them, as they probably told you. To me that's very important. That's really the fun of teaching. That's the reward of teaching.

*I talked to a gentleman yesterday named Jack Stratton, who is eighty years old. And it's kind of interesting to talk to a guy that's eighty years old, and I am now talking to his high school teacher, who, of course, is ninety years old.*

Right. [laughter]

*And Jack, of course, spoke highly of you, too, and he told me a little anecdote about when he was going to school, and you would shoot free-throw baskets. You want to expand on that?*

Yes. My former players got quite a kick out of this, and so did I, that I was, braggadociously, very good at shooting free throws. It was quite common that I could make twenty-three, twenty-four out of twenty-five. What we would do is we'd shoot ten free throws, but we'd throw our nickels and dimes on the floor, and then each one would shoot ten free throws, and whoever made the most out of the ten would pick up all the dimes, see. [laughter] So, I did this during the noon hour, during the lunch hour, and I did it just before they went to lunch. So, frequently, I got their lunch money. [laughter] For years they bought my lunch, unintentionally, by this free-throw contest.

*Did you ever catch hell from the authorities?*

Oh, yes. The vice-principal came down one day, and saw the money on the floor, and he called me aside, and he said, "You can't be down here gambling with these kids." And Harold Dayton, one that frequently I won from, said, "He's not gambling. He wins *all* the time." [laughter] And believe it or not—again bragging, believe it or not—I developed a rhythm of shooting the free throws, and they could blindfold me, and I could *still* shoot the free throws, because shooting the free throws, you had that rhythm, you know. But they got quite a kick out of that, and every now and then they'd beat me, too.

Another thing, I had two or three of my former students, or my present students, but we would make a bet on my walking on my hands. And I was good at that. I could walk the length of the gym on my hands. But when I would start out I would show them, demonstrate that I'm going to walk on my hands, and I'd



take about three steps and fall down. And then one of the other kids that was in cahoots with me would make a bet that I couldn't walk ten steps. Well, he saw me fall down with three or four. So again, they'd put their money on the floor, and he'd egg the bets on, and split with me, see. [laughter] And then, after they got their money on the floor, I'd walk from one end of the court to the center of the floor. [laughter] And again, we'd pick up the money, and that's how I made the money I have today. [laughter]

*So you were able to retire off of the nickels and dimes?*

Right. [laughter] Facetiously, of course.

*You mentioned that you have binders that include eleven thousand students? Is that how many you have taught over the years?*

Oh, yes. And this is both boys and girls. And I still carry on a great correspondence with my former students, all over the world.

*But you guesstimate that you have taught eleven thousand.*

Easily.

*Maybe more?*

Right. But, of course, sixty-nine years of teaching. And back in those days, frequently, the P.E. class would be sixty, seventy students, because they didn't have too many P.E. classes. And when I first started teaching P.E. they weren't dressed for P.E. We didn't have the facilities, we didn't have the lockers; we didn't have the showers, so frequently they weren't even dressed for P.E.

*You just took P.E. in whatever clothes you had.*

Right. Or they may bring old clothes or something. And humorously—imagine, I'd never get away with this today—but at one time they would run from the old high school for the P.E. class there on West and Fifth Street. They'd run from the old high school down to the river. Now, at that time, though, they were dressed for P.E. They'd run down to the river, and then I had a cable across the river, and they'd go across on the cable on their hands. [laughter] If they didn't make it, into the drink they'd go. [laughter] See? So we did a lot of things in P.E. that you'd never get away with today, but the P.E. classes were in as good a shape as any of the athletes in school. In those days you were excused from P.E. while you were taking part in football, basketball, or whatever. When the season ended the athletes would come back to the P.E. class, and, frequently, the P.E. class was tougher than what they went through in football. [laughter]

*Was P.E. mandatory in those years?*

P.E. was mandatory, right. Everybody had to take it. You either take P.E. or R.O. [ROTC]. The only way you could get out of P.E. is by taking R.O., but you also could take both.

And speaking of R.O., we had General Dale Smith, who was in my P.E. class at one time, General Milner, who was in my class. So, I got some pretty high ranking guys in the military, too. For a long time, Ashley Van Slyck and Willy Delzel were the top commanders out here at the air base, and they were in my class. And I'm quite proud of Colonel Mason, who passed away recently. High ranking military people, and, of course Link Piazza, who you know, did numerable missions over Europe. So I'm very, very proud of my former students.

I hope I'll be as proud of the ones I have now. [laughter] But I'm continually using my former students as a model for the classes that I'm teaching now. I probably bore them to death, telling them about the success of my former students, like federal judge,

Ed Reed, after whom Reed High School is named; and Buddy Garfinkle, principal; and Roger Trounday, Pete Cladianos, Ben Akert—outstanding business people in the community. And I'm telling them that they once sat in this class. Bill Raggio and Judge Salcedo—they were my former students, and I always end it by, "Go, ye, and do likewise." See? [laughter]

*Well, the people you've taught have excelled in so many different fields. It isn't just the military or just business.*

Right. They've succeeded in spite of me, see.

*Go ahead. You have any more?*

Well, it's fun to get together with these people. Of course, Don Carano, I'm very proud of—an attorney and heading the Eldorado. And Greg Carano, he's high in management at the Eldorado and Silver Legacy. It's just fun to run into these people from time to time. And another very rewarding thing, if I go down for twenty minutes of shopping or to get a tank of gas, I'm running into a former student. And that's a real pleasure.

*You must know as many people in town as anyone.*

I probably do. Right. I probably have as wide an acquaintance, yet with all the new people coming in, it does make a difference, the thousands of people that I don't know, that I haven't had as former students. But yesterday I attended a meeting of retired state employees, and here scattered all over the place were my former students. And it makes it fun to get out and go places.

*Did someone speak at that luncheon yesterday?*

Yes, but he wasn't one of my former students.

*Oh, I thought maybe you spoke there.*

Well, I'm frequently speaking someplace, getting a free lunch of course. [laughter] But it's just great, running into them everyplace. Don Peckham, for instance, he missed the meeting yesterday. I'm going back and changing his grade. But he's very active in the retired state employees. And I'm on the State Board of Directors of the Retired State Employees. I'm very active in Kiwanis as we talked about before. I'm a former president of Kiwanis, and a former board member of Kiwanis. And then, I think we mentioned once before that I have managed to make a few halls of fame: the State of Nevada's Coaches Hall of Fame and in the national PTA. I'm in the Stockton Hall of Fame and in the LaSalle Baseball Hall of Fame, that includes all of California.

*That LaSalle Baseball Hall of Fame, is that in Sacramento?*

Yes, that meets in Sacramento once a year, at Christian Brothers High School.

*Is everyone in that? You say that that encompasses the entire state of California, or is it more northern California?*

Well, the LaSalle Hall of Fame is pretty much northern California and is loaded with former major league ballplayers and with former Coast League ballplayers. A good number have passed on, but we're all still members of that. I attended the Sparks Sertoma Club, and I was selected as their Man of the Year back, oh, eight or ten years ago. I got as far in that Man of the Year competition that I was selected the Man of the Year in Nevada, California, and the Hawaiian Islands. I've also been selected Twenty-Thirty Club Teacher of the Year, Washoe High Teacher of the Year, and by Kiwanis International as Educator of the Year



Bud Beasley at his induction into the LaSalle Baseball Hall of Fame, Sacramento, 1985.

for California, Arizona, Nevada, and Hawaii. That covers a lot of territory. And I'm bragging, but I'm proud of that. I really am.

*Well, your old partner, Dizzy Dean, said, "It ain't bragging if you've done it." So you've done it.*

[laughter] I like that. Right. And as I say, that's one of the things that I liked about Don Manoukian. In high school, in college, everywhere, Don bragged, but he made good on his bragging.

*Yes. Talk the talk, and walk the walk.*

That's right.

*You've accomplished a lot of things, and you're proud of a lot of them, but, to me, if I were you, I would be proudest of having an elemen-*

*tary school named after me. And you have Bud Beasley Elementary School. Would you tell us about that, and how it came about, and where it's located?*

Yes, I'd be happy to tell you about that. When they started building, they badly needed about five new grammar schools and a couple of middle schools. When they started naming the schools after people, I objected to it, and my name hadn't come up yet, even, but I objected to it, because I had a strong feeling that we should name schools after locales, like Mount Rose and Galena and Northside and Westside and whatever. But rather than name them after people, name them after the neighborhoods in which they were located, because the people could relate to that more. And then, too, I remember my good friends like E. Otis Vaughn and Billinghamurst, and they were great educators and made a contribution, but the kids going there now never heard of them, nor did the parents. So, they lose that intimacy and that rapport that exists maybe today, but tomorrow it doesn't.

So two or three times I wrote to the school board expressing that feeling, that I thought it would be much better to name the schools after locations, rather than after people. Besides, I watched several schools being named after school board members, in which they named the schools after themselves, and this brought a great deal of criticism from the community. Then, I saw, too, that this group would propose one name, and this group over here propose another name, and there was a conflict there.

So I'm against this and wrote letters against it. Then, one of my former students, Lou Mendive—after whom Mendive Middle School is named—his name came up to name a school after him. I was so intrigued and wanted so much to name the school after my good friend and former student that I wrote a letter recommending him. [laughter] And the board again said, "What's this? We've been receiving letters with, 'No, no,' and now this comes up."

So, shortly thereafter, some of my former students, of which Ken Fujii was one of the promoters, wanted a school named after me. Again I wrote the board objecting to it, but they did it, anyway. And I jokingly say that they didn't name it to honor me, rather, you normally name a school after an educator that has passed away or retired, and here I've neither passed away nor retired, so they're hinting for me to do one of the two, and they named the school after me.

Where is it located? Well, jokingly, I used to say that it's located halfway between Joe Conforte's and the sewer plant. [laughter] But actually, it's on Vista Boulevard, that runs through Sparks, pretty close to dead ending at Highway 80. Then Vista runs clear on out to the Wingfield development out there, but the school takes off on Alta Vista and up to Canyon Drive. It's a whole new area. Thousands of homes have been built in there, and that's the Beasley Elementary School.

*Is Canyon Drive the name of the street that it's on?*

Right. And it's high on a hill, overlooking the whole valley. I love to think of it, and probably rightly so, as the best view of any school in Washoe County. It is just beautiful up there. You see all these mountains, and a very, very financially stable neighborhood. All the homes are in the high-price range, beautifully landscaped, and just a great bunch of parents. I wish I could attend more of the PTA meetings, but I can't, because it conflicts with my night classes, but I do go to their school events, their plays, and dances, and science fair, and assemblies—spend a good deal of time up there.

Scott Herthel, the principal, is a great guy who's doing a great job. Great bunch of kids. It's just a real treat to go up there and hug those little kids and sign autographs for them. And it's received quite a bit of publicity in the papers, lately. I go up and read stories to them, do magic, and whatever. But I really enjoy mixing and being with those kids.



Bud Beasley Elementary School

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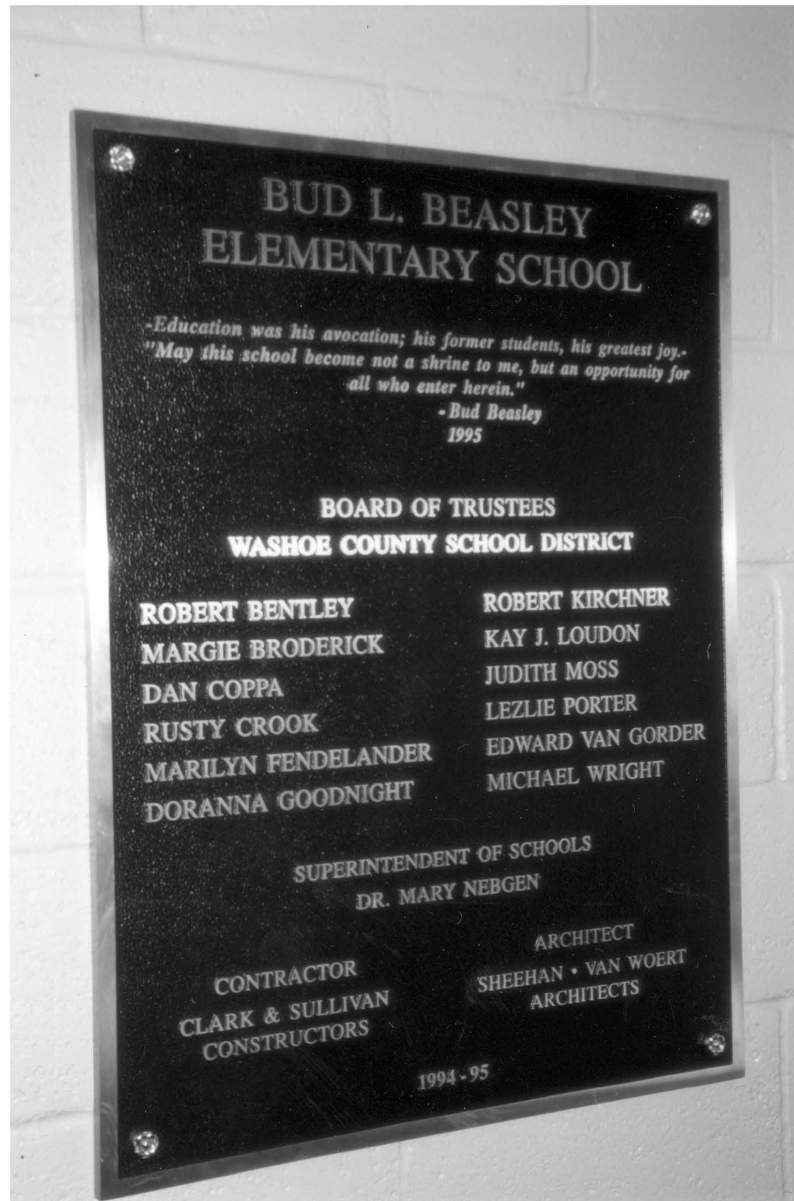
*What year did the school open?*

About five, six years ago, it opened with about five hundred students, and today we're around eight hundred, and overcrowded because of the development out there. Actually, it's pretty close to the Spanish Springs area, but east of Spanish Springs in general.

*Do they have any display or any of your memorabilia in the school?*

Again, a lot of these questions you're asking, I'm a little hesitant, because it's bragging, it's conceited, but, still, it is fact. Yes, just as you come in the school, there's a beautiful bronze plaque there with my name, of course, and I wish I could recall the quotation. It's my quotation, but the quotation of mine on that bronze plaque goes something like this, "This school was not built as a shrine to me, but rather as an opportunity for learning for all who come herein." And that is the philosophy on the plaque. Then, as you go into the building, there's a beautiful case, contributed by my former students, by the way. They've done a lot for me. [laughter] Of course, they have to, or I'll go back and change their grade.





The dedication plaque at Bud Beasley Elementary.

But there's a beautiful case, a big case, with all my memorabilia in there: pictures, awards, and certificates that I've received. Even my old baseball glove is in there, and baseball pictures and that sort of thing. I think there's also a plaque in there for when I was named Man of the Year by the Salvation Army. And I have made considerable contributions in charity, locally, to different organizations and things. I'm a strong supporter of disabled veterans, because I have a deep feeling for them, and for many of my former students. But this case is loaded with memorabilia, and, of course, what appeals to the boys, particularly, are the baseball pictures in there, see, and baseballs. Occasionally, I give them an autographed baseball or something, and I receive autographed baseballs from my former students, also. If they win a trophy in this league that they're in, I end up with a trophy.

But that case, I'm very proud of it, and doubly proud of it because it was donated by my former students. I try desperately not to cost the school board anything, and when they built the school, believe it or not, a lot of my former students that are contractors and so forth, made bids at cost to get the school built. So, it is a beautiful school in a beautiful location, with a great faculty and great support from the parents. I attend their annual breakfast that they have every year and meet and mix with the parents. Then, they have a barbeque in the beginning of school to get everybody acquainted, and I make all of those. I do it not as an obligation, but as a pleasure. It's just great to meet and greet the parents and those kids. It's just great to have your picture taken with them, and they are all flocking around you. [laughter]

*And you get new kids every year.*

Right. And it's things like that that mean a lot to me. *You* have no idea how it pleases me when you come, having met with my former students, and tell me what they have to say about me.

That means a lot to me, particularly. Obviously, when they see me they're going to say something nice, along with heckling me and kidding me. But they're going to say something nice, because I can always go back and change their grades, see. [laughter] But you have no idea how it pleases me when I hear from a third party that they've talked to, and they've said, "Hey, that guy, we had fun with him. We enjoyed him. He did a good job." That really has meaning.

*The phrase I hear so much is that, "He was such an influence on my life." And I've heard several people say, "He was the most influential person in my life." When you think about the people that these people have come in contact with, not just counting their parents, but as they've gone on to further education in colleges or universities or in the business world, and to still go back and say, "Bud Beasley, in high school, was the biggest influence on my life."*

Oh, that's my pay. That's why I keep on teaching. I enjoy what I'm doing, and if I can continue to make that influence on my students now, hey, that's what it's all about.

*Right. It's almost a good place to close it, with your statement, "That's what it's all about." Because that is kind of the story of your life.*

Right.

*So, I will just say thank you very much for the time and effort you've given us.*

It was a pleasure. The only thing that I dislike about you, is you were a good hitter, yourself.

*[laughter]*

And as a pitcher, why, they once asked me if I had any superstitions, and I said, "I'm superstitious of every guy that comes up there with a bat in his hand." [laughter]

*Yes. That's like what Ted Williams said about some pitchers. He said, "I hated all pitchers." It's just like you. You hate all batters. Pitchers hate all batters.*

Right. [laughter] I always had a great respect for those batters, though. I knew the tough ones, and there's where you really have to concentrate, and I don't want anybody breaking my concentration—which Lefty O'Doul, boy, he really worked on that. [laughter]

*How about Stengel? Did he try and break your concentration, too?*

They all tried it, quite a few of them.

*But Stengel, or O'Doul, was the best?*

With Stengel, I'm not sure that he was trying to break my concentration, but he saw, by imitating me, that the crowd would start laughing and applauding him, see. So, we both were showboats, and we both were trying to continually out-showboat each other, and this pleased the crowd, and he knew that, and I knew that. And, hey, that was our bread and butter. [laughter] And at that time, both Casey and I were over the hills. [laughter]

*It's amazing he didn't try and sign you for the Oakland Oaks, because you'd have made a good pair.*

As a matter of fact, my own club didn't tell me this, because they were going to have to give me more money if somebody else is going to give me more money, see. So I didn't find out till I left

that deals like this were in the fire, and then they'd tell me, see, and for obvious reasons. [laughter] But I understood that both O'Doul and Stengel had at least made attempts.

*That they wanted you on their team?*

Right. I knew it. Jo-Jo White and Earl Sheely in Seattle—I knew they did, because they felt me out. “How do you feel about coming here?” And I later found out, though, that they were trying to get me a month or so before I knew it. The manager at Sacramento was equally anxious to get me out of there, but the stockholders and the business manager, they had a good thing going, crowd-wise, so they fought this tooth and nail. It wasn't so much that I was worth that much to them as a ballplayer, but I did draw a crowd.

*Like you said, you filled the seats, and you sold a lot of hot dogs and beer.*

Right. [laughter]

*If you had to do it all over again, is there anything you'd change?*

Oh, thousands of things. I think I would work harder to be a better player. I can think of a lot of things I would have done that would have made me a better player, even. I knew that I had to be in top shape, which I was. I jogged. When I was considerably older than the rest of the Solon players, none of them was in good a shape as I was, and the same at Seattle. Same at Vancouver—none of them were in better shape. And I also knew that I had to beat them with my brains. I had to be sure I knew the rules, take advantage of the rules. For instance, I had twenty seconds to deliver to the plate, right? Somehow or other, mentally, I could visualize that, so I'd go nineteen seconds. [laughter] But I had to

figure out how to beat them mentally, also. The fast ball wasn't what it once was, the curve ball wasn't, so I had to rely on control. But if I could spot pitch, hey, I'm going to last two or three more years. And if I knew the spots to throw to. So, those two things were factors, but I can think of a lot of other things that would have made me a better player, if I had gotten serious about it.

*Well, you got older, you got smarter.*

Exactly. And don't we all?

*Right. Hopefully.*

Right. [laughter]

*But you would never have changed being an educator?*

Oh, no.

*Or a ball player?*

No. I had all kinds of chances to go farther in baseball, and no way. Education was my baby. And then, too, I could see that education would last a lifetime, where baseball isn't going to. So that caused me to make decisions.

*But the two went hand in hand for you in a way, because your athletics as a young man got you the scholarships and got you into college.*

Right. I owe an ungodly amount to athletics, I really do. In high school, in college, I got jobs that I wouldn't have had otherwise. Got jobs doing a lot of different things, because I was playing on the town team or something. Even Billingshurst was a great baseball fan of Jack Threlkel's.

*Oh, he was?*

Yes, Billinghamurst was there at all the games. Well, obviously, it was much easier for me to get a teaching job than somebody who wasn't a baseball player, see. [laughter] And then Vaughn, his kids played for me. So coaching and baseball opened a lot of doors for me. And I owe a lot to baseball, I really do.

*Well, those are the two big things in your life, education and baseball.*

Definitely, definitely. Well, this has been fun. Yes, it has.

*Yes. I hate to see it end, but that's life, I guess.*

That's right—all things must come to an end. [laughter]





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